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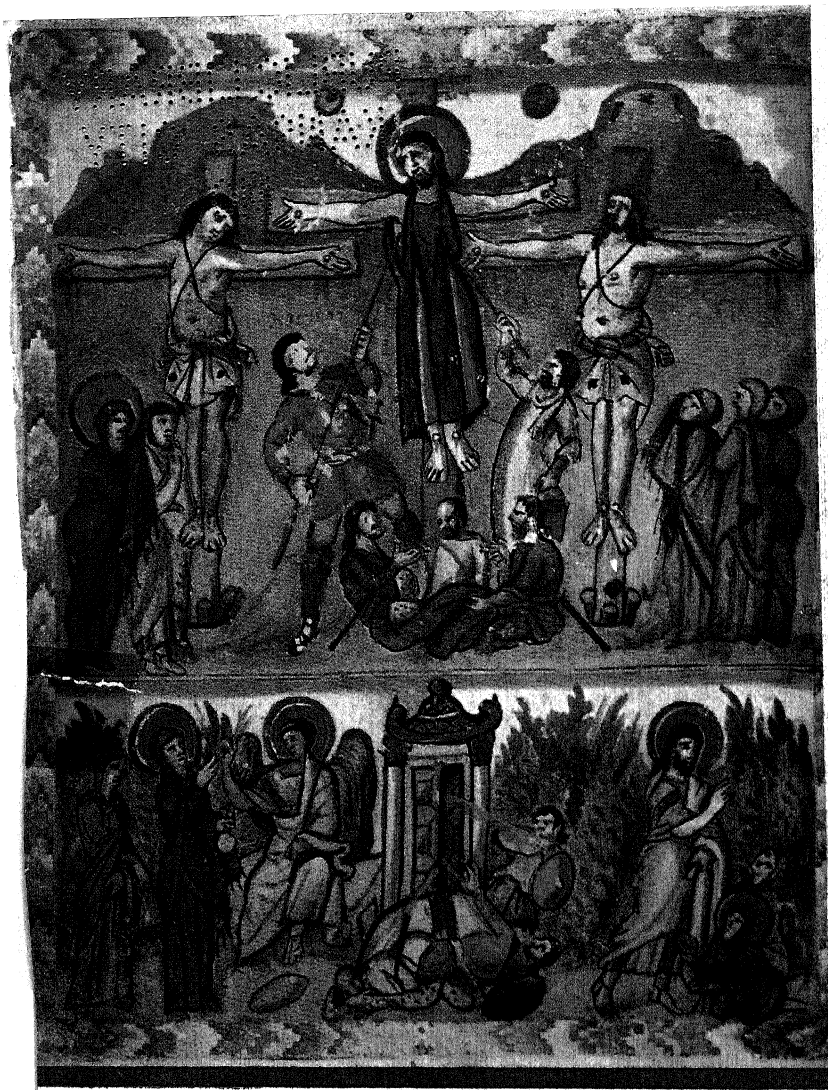
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# THE VOICES OF THE CATHEDRAL







#### THE CRUCIFIXION AND THE RESURRECTION

Symbolic and doctrinal influences are revealed in the Crucifixion and Resurrection scenes shown in the Syriac Gospel of Rabula (Sixth Century), now in Florence. For example, Longinus is piercing the heart of Jesus on the right side because Eve was taken from the right side of Adam, and the Church is the new Eve created from the Blood of Christ.

THE VOICES OF  
**The Cathedral**

TALES IN STONE AND LEGENDS IN GLASS

By

SARTELL PRENTICE

*author of*

THE HERITAGE OF THE CATHEDRAL



NEW YORK

**William Morrow and Company**

MCMXXXVIII

THE VOICES OF  
THE CATHEDRAL

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TO  
THREE LITTLE GIRLS WHO DIED

TO OUR OWN DAUGHTER  
LYDIA VANDERPOEL  
who died in infancy, October 12, 1902

TO OUR GRANDCHILDREN  
daughters of Sartell Prentice, Jr. and Marjorie Koop Prentice

PATRICIA  
Born April 19, 1933; Died August 4, 1934

ADELAIDE VANDERPOEL  
Born March 19, 1935; Died in infancy

*"So small a maid to cause so great a sorrow."*

So wrote Paul the Deacon of little Hildegarde,  
daughter of Charlemagne, who died in her cradle  
at Aachen more than eleven hundred years ago.



To  
Barbara and Carolyn:

In years to come, when school and college lie behind you and when you shall have made the "Grand Tour," you will, I hope, make many little tours to the old Cathedral towns of England and the Continent. When that time comes you will doubtless speak French well, and probably enough German and Italian to enable you to visit those countries with understanding. There is, however, one other language that is really essential, a language that few understand but with which I want you to be familiar—it is that which the Cathedrals speak. If you can talk with them they will teach you more than any school or college, for the Cathedral knows more history, and knows it more intimately, than the Faculties of all our Universities in convention assembled. She understands more languages, living or dead, than any School of Languages can even name; and, being by far the finest *raconteuse* in all the world, she has more tales to tell than the shelves of our libraries could accommodate.

I would like to travel with you when you go abroad, and I think I will; if not in person then you will find me packed away in the pages of this book, and also in those of *The Heritage of the Cathedral* which you already have.

These books of mine will also serve to introduce you to my friends in Europe: in France, to Coutances, Chartres, Beaulieu, Conques, and Bourges; in Italy, to S. Ambrogio in Milan, S. Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna, to Borgo S. Donnino and Modena; in England, to Winchester, to Canterbury, Westminster, York, and

Durham; to these and all their kith and kin to whom they will pass you on with added courtesies.

I would like to introduce you to other churches across the Pyrenees, many of them old in years and very wise, but I greatly fear my friends in Spain are dead. Those that may have survived the violences of civil war, however, will give you a royal welcome, and if you will find some quiet corner in their aisles where you may sit and listen I know you will enjoy many pleasant and profitable hours in their company.

Your affectionate grandfather,

SARTELL PRENTICE

New York, N. Y.

August, 1937.

## Ut Gratias Reddam

TRAVELLING through Spain in those almost forgotten days when the automobile was a curiosity rather than a necessity, we had spent a busy morning in a preliminary survey of the churches of Avila. Towards noon, when our carriage stopped at the doors of the cathedral, my very small son and namesake, aged three years, glanced up with deep distaste and then settled back into his seat, announcing with decisive finality, "*Une autre église! Je reste ici, moi.*" Thus, with admirable brevity, he constituted himself the spokesman for many other, and older, tourists.

Typical of these was a party of four who arrived late one afternoon at the hotel in Carcassonne, proud of the fact that they had motored since morning from the Italian frontier to within easy reach of the Spanish border, from the Route des Alpes to the Corbieres Pyrénées. They had not seen the Merovingian baptistry at Fréjus, the cloisters at Aix, or the oldest battle trophy in all France—the Moslem banner (preserved at Apt as the robe of S. Anne) which a Provençal knight had captured when the Crusaders stormed Jerusalem in 1099. They had swept by Montmajour, Avignon, Arles, and S. Gilles; they had missed the fortified churches of Les Saintes Maries and Agde; they had not seen Béziers, with its dark memories of Simon de Montfort, or the great Romanesque Abbey of Fontfroide; they had seen nothing but—they had driven from Mentone to Carcassonne in a single day!

If we had asked them why they had left unseen so many great churches they would doubtless have replied, as others have: "We had already seen half a dozen churches; they all looked alike to

us and the last ones bored us. Why should we stop to look at more?"

This used to puzzle me. Do we stop reading when we have read half a dozen books? Do we hear no more concerts when we have attended one, or pass the galleries of the Vatican, the Pitti Palace, the Uffizi and the Prado because we have seen the Louvre? But I have come to a great sympathy with these tired tourists. The truth is that the cathedral, aloof and distant, would not speak to them, and you can no more understand a church that will not speak to you by walking through the aisles than you can understand an Arabic Library by passing between the stacks of books. The church is very slow in making friends—in fact there are just four to whom she will really open up her heart and mind. She will speak to the Historian as she will speak to no one else; but so also will she speak, in turn, to the Architect, the Artist, and to the Archæologist; to each a part, to none the whole. It is only when these four go down her aisles together, each receiving and interpreting, that the full, fine story of the cathedral is ever told.

In an earlier book, *The Heritage of the Cathedral*, we made our visit with the Historian, the Architect, the Archæologist, and the Artist, although then the Artist dropped behind and asked few questions. Now the Architect will follow while the Artist takes the lead, with the Historian and the Archæologist at his right hand and his left. But the artist whom we have chosen for our company will not, for the moment, be interested in the techniques of his art, nor would the cathedral answer his questions if he were; she is not interested in these things, being very human and only concerned with the sons of men.

The questions we shall ask begin with a "Whence?" or with a "Why?" Whence did the mediæval artist draw his theme, and

why did he select it? Sometimes the Historian or the Archæologist will understand the cathedral's answer better than the Artist, but to one of the three she will always give reply.

Because Iconography is a jealous mistress, demanding the service of a lifetime from her devotees, I have taken the materials for these chapters from the labours of many students, especially from those of M. Émile Mâle. In referring to his volumes, *L'Art Religieux du XII<sup>e</sup> Siècle en France*; *L'Art Religieux du XIII<sup>e</sup> Siècle en France*; *L'Art Religieux de la Fin du Moyen Âge*, I have, for brevity's sake, omitted the titles and spoken of them as Mâle, Vol. I, II, or III.

I have also used freely the works of M. Louis Bréhier: *L'Art Byzantine*, *L'Art Chrétien*, and *L'Art des Barbares* in the *Histoire Universelle de l'Art*. Among authorities too numerous to be completely listed here I have borrowed from Mr. Charles Dalton's *Byzantine Art and Archæology*; G. G. Coulton, *Art and the Reformation*; and Josef Strzygowski, *Origins of Christian Church Art*.

I am particularly indebted to Professor C. Rufus Morey, Chairman of the Department of Art and Archæology at Princeton University, and to Dr. Joseph Cullen Ayer, Professor of Ecclesiastical History at the Protestant Episcopal Divinity School, for the care with which they have read and corrected the entire manuscript; and also to Professor Talbot Faulkner Hamlin of Columbia University for his many comments and suggestions, and for his help in selecting and editing the illustrations. There are many other scholars by whose labours I have been enriched and to these I have endeavoured to give full credit in the text.

The illustrations are from photographs of the American Museum of Natural History, New York; Archives Photographiques

d'Art et d'Histoire, Paris; from Alinari, in Florence; Bianchi, Monza; P. Bochter; Giraudon, Paris; Ivo Mezzo, Genoa; Pisseri, Pisa; Princeton University Library, Princeton, N. J.; Tyndall, Ely, England; and the Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York. The drawings in the text are from *L'Art Chrétien* by L. Bréhier; *Art and the Reformation* by G. G. Coulton; *Christian Iconography* by M. Didron; and *L'Art Religieux de la Fin du Moyen Âge* by Émile Mâle.

We shall take our threads from the spindles of many spinners, but we shall make our own design, draw our own pattern and, with those threads, shall weave our own tapestry.

I would briefly acknowledge again, as in the earlier volume, my debt to my editorial son, Pierrepont Isham Prentice, whose comments and criticisms have had immeasurably greater value because his blue pencil, never having had a father, was released from the serious handicaps of filial respect; and to my wife, Lydia Vanderpoel, who has supervised my spelling, compared and corrected manuscripts, and read the printer's proof.

S. P.



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# THE VOICES OF THE CATHEDRAL





## Introduction

### SURVEYING THE ROUTE

THE graceful arabesques that cover the walls of the Alhambra have for us only a decorative value, but any student from the Moslem University in Cairo would read, amid the flowing lines, occasional verses from the Koran or the muezzin's call to prayer—"There is no God but Allah and Mohammed is His prophet." The work of the Moorish decorator is, however, hardly less intelligible to the tourist than is that of the Christian artist—sculptor, painter, glazier, mosaicist, engraver, or enamelist—who wrought upon the walls, aisles, and altars of Romanesque or Gothic churches.

The little golden idols falling from the pedestals in the glass of Chartres, the strangler of lions on a capital of the chapter house of S. Georges-Boscherville, the saint of Notre-Dame carrying a loaf of bread in her hands, the four dead men lying beneath the walls of a city in the bas-reliefs of Ripoll perplex us with questions for which we have as yet no answer.

Even the most philistine of visitors feels that there is more here than he can understand, that the glazier who leaded his little figures into the glass of Chartres, the sculptor who carved the porch of S. Trophîme at Arles, the engraver who wrought the borders of the reliquary of the Holy Blood at Tournai spoke to his age in words that fail to reach our own. The changing centuries, not death, have stilled his voice. Then men dreamed dreams and saw visions that we have lost, and the art of the

Church—to us but quaint and curious—was an open doorway through which they passed freely into countries whose frontiers we may not cross.

If we could spend an hour with the Thirteenth Century we would better understand how different are the foundations upon which we build, and the gods in whom we put our trust. For instance: when the cold of early autumn begins to threaten we pass watchful nights feeding the fires, blazing between our rows of orange trees, wherewith we fight the perils of the frost. The mediæval Provençal, on the other hand, left all his fears, with a candle and a prayer, upon the altar of S. Médard. We may carry the image of S. Christopher, patron saint of travellers, upon the windshields of our cars, or stop with hundreds of other motorists before the saint's church on S. Christopher's day to receive the blessings of the priest, but—we do not forget our insurance papers. The traveller of Gothic years merely bent a knee before the statue of the protective saint at break of day and then rode perilous roads with a care-free song upon his lips.

When pestilences threaten we draw our quarantine lines, strengthen our sanitary codes and take our inoculations, but the householder of the Thirteenth Century placed the name or the image of S. Roch above his door and then went his way, confident that no evil could come nigh his dwelling. It would never occur to the Mayor of New York to send expert thieves to rob a cemetery in Atlanta, but in the Fifteenth Century the rulers of Venice, whose city was threatened by the plague, despatched their agents in the guise of pilgrims to steal the body of S. Roch from his grave in Montpellier. When the holy brigands returned with their sacred loot the entire city, led by the Doge, went forth to welcome them, and the Venetian Church of S. Roch (Rocco) still remains as the memorial of that pious raid of Italians upon France.

In truth, these men of ages gone lived in the consciousness of a supersensible world that was as vibrant to them as it is pulseless to us. Watched over all the days of their lives by angels, saints, and martyrs, they rested in the hollows of mighty and kindly hands, rich where we are poor and poor where we are rich. Janus has closed his doors: we may not pass to them nor they to us. Not only the gift of sharing but even that of understanding, which was the common possession of the children of Romanesque and Gothic years, is denied to us.

Yet our inability to understand would have been quite incomprehensible to those who wrought and worshipped here. Their intention was to teach so clearly—in frescoes, glass, or reliefs—the great lessons of the Church that even he who ran might read. From the days of the great Gregory in the Sixth Century to the end of the Gothic age the artists tried to show the people through their art the things they should believe and the paths in which they ought to walk. But we, being unlettered where they were wise, are blind and ignorant beside the peasant or the child of six hundred years ago.

Benoît Biscop, Abbot of Wearmouth in the Seventh Century, felt with Gregory the Great that those who could not read should be able to find, frescoed or carved upon the walls, that which the learned found in books. In the Ninth Century Walafrid Strabo called pictures "the literature of the illiterate"; two hundred years later the Council of Arras added its voice to those of Gregory, of the Abbot of Wearmouth and Walafrid Strabo. In the Twelfth Century Suger, Abbot of S. Denis, wrote to S. Bernard, bitter foe of artists, his belief that the church, through the medallions in her windows or by the carvings on her stones, should be a veritable book of sermons, rich in catechetical instruction.

It was, therefore, the purpose of both priest and artist that all the people, lettered or unlearned, should be taught wisdom by the Church's art. If, then, we are confused by them, they would be even more perplexed by us, by our inability to understand the things that even the peasant and the child once knew.

Yet even though we may not be able to read the lessons the artists then taught their people we can, at least, appreciate the beauty of their handiwork far more clearly than could our fathers of the Eighteenth Century. To them the art and the architecture of the Gothic age were deposits from barbarian invasions which had broken the true line of the great inheritance which had descended from the classic world of Greece and Rome. Increasingly since the Renaissance scholars had looked upon the artistic standards laid down in pagan days as something whose every jot and tittle had come from the hands of a Supreme Authority and from which no least departure might be made. The very word "Gothic" became a superlative in the vocabulary of the contemptuous. When the verb "to advocate"—born and abandoned in England but adopted in the United States—returned to visit the land of its birth, the critics denounced it as a loathsome word, "Gothic and against God." About the same time a London review, attacking Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia*, joined in one sentence its condemnation of "bad manners" and "Gothic speech."

Racine, Molière, Goethe, and Voltaire led the chorus of dispraise. Gothic art and architecture were "barbarous," "coarse curiosities"; they "lacked good taste," were "monsters of ignorant times" and "waged a mortal battle with refinement."<sup>1</sup>

Then, with the abruptness with which the tides rush inland

<sup>1</sup> H. L. Mencken in *The Yale Review*, Spring, 1936; H. L. Mencken, *The American Language*.

from the Bay of Fundy, the chorus changed and a new appraisal of Gothic art began from the very men who had most scathingly condemned it.

"We know what we are," wrote Shakespere, "but know not what we may be," and certainly the scornful critics of the Eighteenth Century would have been incredulous if some Sibyl had foretold that they should lead the way to a new appreciation of the Gothic age. How could they have imagined, when listening to Voltaire's denunciation of Shakespere as a "drunken savage without the least spark of good taste," that their defence of the English poet would lead to a high appreciation of that which they continued to despise? Yet Lessing, Goethe, and Winckelmann, although steadily asserting the authority in art and in architecture of the ancient classic standards, turned the thought of their times, through their praise of Shakespere's genius, to the mediæval field of which he wrote. The rediscovery of the Thirteenth Century was furthered in England by the romances of Sir Walter Scott, and in France by those of Victor Hugo whose praise of the great cathedral in *Nôtre Dame de Paris* is one of the classics of French literature. It was to "that attention thus devoted to the history, literature, and art of the middle ages, so long despised under Renaissance influences, [that] the buttressed Gothic dates its rise as a modern architectural style."<sup>2</sup>

Thus we of the Twentieth Century, released from the handicaps of the Renaissance, have come to an appreciation of the Gothic that was impossible to our fathers two hundred years ago.

But we have come into the possession of that which is far greater than a mere æsthetic appreciation of the beauty which men, dead these many centuries, wrought into their cathedrals. Thanks to the labours of great archæologists we have won an

<sup>2</sup> W. H. Goodyear, *History of Art and Architecture*, p. 15.

understanding of values and meanings that were hidden from the eyes of priests and scholars in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries. They could not recognize, as we do, a Sumerian king who became a demigod in the strangler of lions at S. Georges-Boscherville; nor could they discover in the embattled animals or misshapen monsters on the capitals of their churches an inheritance from Scythians or Sarmatians of distant Asia. They could not see the stately ceremonials of Byzantine courts reflected in the tiny napkins wherewith angels carry the souls of the redeemed to Paradise, as in the tympanum of Bourges Cathedral. For us, but not for them, an intellectual appreciation of the art of the cathedral has been made possible by the patient labours of many archæologists. It is only in our century that such students as Émile Mâle, Louis Bréhier, Charles Dalton, Josef Strzygowski, with others of their kind, turning slowly the pages of early Christian or mediæval treatises, sermons, and philosophies, studying minutely pagan or Christian sarcophagi, the frescoes of Dura or Mistra, the ampoules of Monza, and the miniatures of old manuscripts have revealed the cathedral to us as a palimpsest whose façade has been many times written over; on whose walls, portals, capitals, and windows the thoughts and beliefs of many generations and diverse races, from the days of Sumer and Accad, are curiously intermingled.

Before we set out, under the leadership of these great guides, to trace in a few hours the pathway that it took our fathers many millennia to blaze, let us halt briefly to survey the route which we shall follow. We begin with men who knew not Christ; for the art of the Church, like its architecture, issued from the womb of paganism. If, in the cubicula of the catacombs where the graves of the martyrs served as altars for the priests, Orpheus and the Good Shepherd, Ulysses in his ship and Noah in his Ark,

the Dioscuri who delivered Rome and the three Hebrews whom God preserved from the flames of Nebuchadrezzar's furnace are frescoed on the walls or modelled on the altar lamps, it is because pagan myths could be made to illustrate the Christian faith. So we start our journey in those dark years when men, stripped of every earthly hope, turned from the threats of Cæsar to the promises of Christ and cast themselves and all they loved upon the Crucified of Calvary. We shall watch them as they painted the symbols of the Resurrection above their sepulchres and share with them, on their tomb-altars, the bread and wine which triumphantly asserted the eternal unity of the Church Militant with the Church Triumphant.

Then, turning our faces towards the East we shall enter the silences of Syrian deserts where at night the pendant stars seem closer than the floating clouds and hear—as Israel's prophets heard—the voices, even the whisperings, of God. We shall walk with Wise Men of the East—with the Greek, the Babylonian, and the Persian—and see the sons of Byzas follow in their train. With the Church we shall pass from poverty to power when Christian Constantine succeeds pagan Diocletian on the Imperial throne; we shall walk the streets of Ephesus, of Chalcedon, of Alexandria and of Constantinople; sit in Councils with famous theologians, and see the birth of our historic Creeds. Then we shall be plunged into the darkness of the long night—five centuries long—as the old civilizations collapse beneath the assaults of barbarians who sweep over the old frontiers, driving the Roman legions into stubborn, slow retreat. We shall rejoice in the light of the Carlovingian renaissance and lament its swift eclipse when new storm clouds gather in the North, the South, and the East and when new barbarians—Northmen, Magyars, and Saracens—fill the lands with desolation.

Then day shall dawn again, a day which, with its early aurora and late twilight, shall last another five hundred years. In its morning pilgrims fill the roads bearing gifts, thank offerings to the kindly saints, which shall enable the monks to enlarge the abbeys they had erected in waste places, and to adorn their walls with carved or frescoed copies of the miniatures of manuscripts which penitents or traders brought to the abbey's gates. We shall share such terrors as those of Raoul Glaber who saw, face to face, the Father of Lies and the Lord of the Lost with his protuberant chest, his gaping mouth, his grinning teeth, his powerful jaws like those of a great hound, his low forehead and flaming hair; with the monks we shall fight him for the souls of the dying, throwing all our weight upon the ropes that ring the consecrated bells, sounding the alarm to the heights of heaven and summoning Michael and his angels; driving all demons from the bedside of the dying and from the pathway of the soul as it speeds from earth to Paradise.<sup>3</sup>

Then, as new social and economic conditions bring the city into being, as the "secular" cathedral replaces the monastic abbey, we shall share the quieter faith of Gothic years—a faith that sought to interpret, through symbolism, the cryptic message that God had written in every created thing and to listen as bird, beast, plant, and flower, each wearing the prophet's mantle, speaks with the prophet's tongue.

Again the twilight falls; Huguenot Christ smites Catholic Christ, and the Jesus from Rome curses and kills the Jesus from Geneva. Deeper and deeper grows the darkness. Ghosts of a dead world walk abroad, clad in the shrouds of the ancient paganism, until the light of the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation

<sup>3</sup> Sometimes the bell refused to ring because the Devil, being desperate, had dared to sit upon the clapper. William Stearns Davis, *Life in Elizabethan Days*, p. 219.



scatters the night and the spectres flee again to their pagan graves. But when the new day dawns we find the old art dead beyond all hope of resurrection, slain by new pagans and by new iconoclasts.

The artists who wrought in the churches of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries carried on the traditions which they had inherited from the Middle Ages. With the Sixteenth Century, however, came the Renaissance and a generation of artists who were more sophisticated, more worldly wise and therefore less able to dream dreams or to see visions; wherefore the history of the East nearly a thousand years before was repeated in the West.

In the year 717 Leo the Isaurian, coming to the throne in Constantinople, had undertaken to banish from the churches those images which had led to the Moslem taunt—"the Christians worship more gods than did the ancient pagans." This imperial decree ushered in a controversy that lasted for over a hundred years, filling the East with riots, massacres, martyrdoms, and confusions, and separating the Eastern from the Western Church.

In the Sixteenth Century the same controversy broke out again, with Calvin and the Protestants playing the part the Moslems had played nine hundred years before. With a breath of his cold logic Calvin withered the poetic spirit which had given birth to so much of Mediæval Art, for if God was everywhere why undertake long pilgrimages to worship, like pagans, doubtful relics? The world was mad to pay the cost in time taken from the fields, in labour, and in silver to journey hundreds of leagues in order to look upon a cloth which, so priests pretended with no real reason, had once enwrapped the dead body of a holy man.

Before this stern iconoclast none of the countless souvenirs of the past found favour; with a relentless hand he smote the urn that had served the needs of the guests at Cana of Galilee, shown by the priests at Angers; the vase that held the tears shed by Jesus over Lazarus, which was among the treasures of Vendôme, and very many pictures painted by the hands of angels for the devotion of men. "Indeed," said Calvin, "it is not the trade of angels to be painters."

The old gods died once more and new gods reigned, but they were of the Intellect, of Science, rather than of Faith. The enthusiasms which had sent all Europe overseas to defend an empty tomb and to bring back, as the greatest wealth the world could offer, a little earth of the Holy Land seemed now inexplicable folly. "In fact," said the inexorable Calvin, "men then spent their bodies and their wealth, and a good portion of the wealth of their country, to bring back a heap of empty follies, wheedling themselves into believing that they were the most precious jewels of all the world." By these follies Calvin meant the forepart of the head of John the Baptist, found amid the ruins of a palace in Constantinople, the remaining portion of the head of the same saint brought by S. Louis to the Sainte Chapelle, the head of S. Anne, a sandal of Jesus, drops of the Virgin's milk, and the mantles, bones, and relics of countless saints, for the sake of which men, rich in a childlike faith, had for centuries undertaken the dangers and the labours of far journeyings. All this world was dissipated by Calvin's logic, and Protestant critics forced the old Church, through the Council of Trent, to put its house in order.

One of the first results of the new spirit of reform was the rigorous examination of those mystery plays which had flourished under the protection of the Church and edified the people

for over four hundred years. To the new generation, critical and more sophisticated, these plays seemed to reduce many scenes of the Bible to the level of mere farces. Therefore, one after another, the Parliaments of Paris, and also of the Provinces, forbade these plays until they were driven into remote districts, far from the busy centres of life, where some of them still survive.

But the disappearance of these plays had serious consequences for Christian art. Throughout all the Middle Ages the mysteries had given form to the iconography. If, in glass or in stone, Jesus wore a violet mantle in the Garden of Gethsemane, if Judas carried a purse and Malchus a lantern, it was because they were so represented in the dramas. The religious theatre helped to maintain a tradition by which the artists were inspired and instructed. When the theatre passed these old traditions lingered for a while in the ateliers of the artists, where the older men remained true to the things which they had seen in youth. One by one these died, however, and with them died also old formulæ and traditions. Forms which had become almost hieratic, no longer preserved and perpetuated by the mysteries or by the vanished generation of artists, lost their meanings and were forgotten. The artists of the late Sixteenth Century found themselves suddenly face to face with the themes of Christian art, but with no traditions to counsel or direct them. This may have flattered their pride, for in Italy men held that the great artist should be indebted only to himself, but art as a whole was the loser.

There were, in the traditions thus abandoned, more of poetry, more of tenderness, more of pathos than any man, however great his genius, could put into his work. So the Reformation, when it killed the religious theatre, touched, indirectly it is true, but vitally, the whole field of Christian art.

The twenty-fifth, and last, session of the Council of Trent

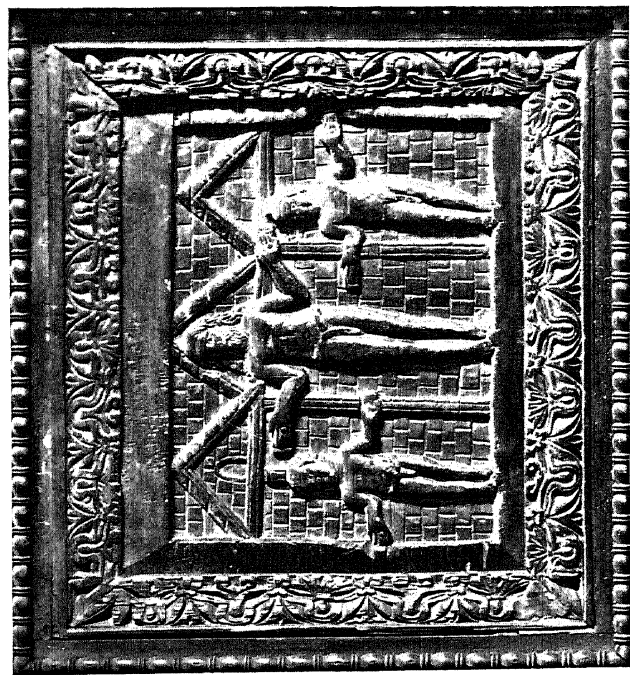
took the following action in order to meet the caustic criticisms of the Reformers:

"The Council forbids the placing in a church of any image that may recall an erroneous doctrine or which may mislead the simple. It wishes to avoid all immodesty, or the giving to any image of attributes that might provoke attack. In order to assure respect for its decision, the Holy Council forbids placing or causing to be placed, in any place, even in those churches which are not subject to the visits of the Ordinary, of any unusual image, at least until the Bishop shall have given his approval."

The wording of the Decree seems to imply that the clergy had not, hitherto, exercised any censorship or supervision over the artist, but in 787 the Second Council of Nicæa had decreed:

"The composition of religious subjects may not be left to the initiative of the artists; it depends upon those principles which have been laid down by the Church, and upon the sacred tradition. . . . The execution alone belongs to the painter, the arrangement and the disposition are determined by the Fathers."

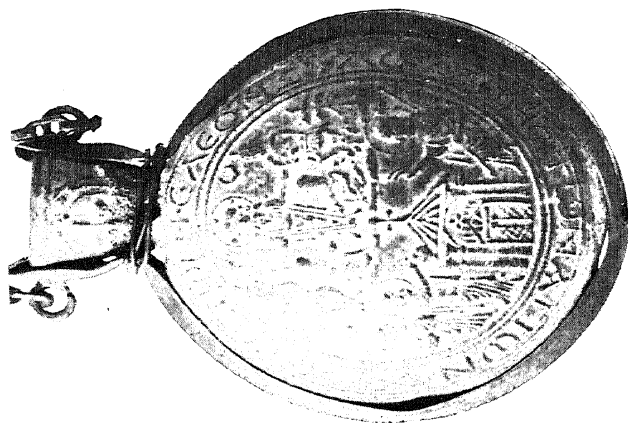
There still exists a contract, signed before a notary, which shows that all the least details, even the colour of the robe of the Virgin and the material, "which must be of white damask," in the painting of the Trinity at Villeneuve-lès-Avignon were dictated to the painter, Enguerrand Charonton, by a priest, Jean de Montagnac. When the wool merchants of Marseilles in 1471 ordered a painting of the history of S. Catherine they wrote into their contract with the artist, Pierre Villate, the express condition that he should advise with Antoine Leydet, the Prior of the Convent of the Dominicans. Instances of such clerical supervision may be quoted from every age, for the artists wrought mainly under the direction of the authorities of the Church.



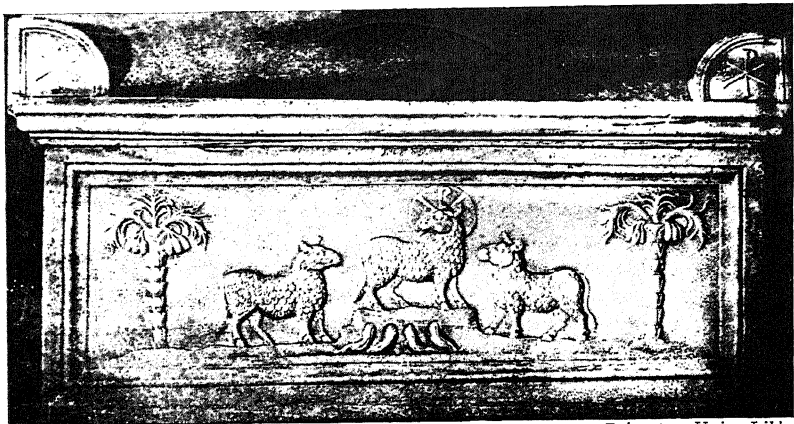
*Alinari*

#### THE CRUCIFIXION SYMBOLIZED WITHOUT THE CROSS

Because crucifixion was a shameful death which might give occasion for pagan jests and taunts, early Christian artists frequently portrayed the crucifixion without the cross; Christ appearing as an orant between the two thieves. Left: Fifth Century wooden doors, S. Sabina, Rome. Right: An ampuole of Monza.



*Bianchi, Monza*



*Princeton Univ. Lib'y.*

### SARCOPHAGUS AT ARLES

Even in the catacombs symbolism became a characteristic of Christian art. Christ is here symbolized as a lamb from beneath whose feet flow the four rivers of Paradise.



*Alinari*

### VAULT MOSAIC OF S. COSTANZA, ROME

Erected by Constantine as a mausoleum for his daughter, this church shows through its décor the displacement of Christian symbolism by themes from secular life—here vintage scene—that followed the recognition of Church by State.

Five years after the Council of Trent Jan Molanus, a professor of the University of Louvain, laid down the lines along which ecclesiastical art should thereafter be developed. To Molanus the old symbols are withered and dead; the whole world, in which the older theologians and artists had heretofore lived, faded like a dream, and with the disappearance of the poetry of that lost world went also the charming fables which, far more kindly and prolific than history could be, had been the chief inspiration of Mediæval Art.

But Molanus had read the criticisms of the Protestants; he knew that the Golden Legend, with its marvellous tales of a host of saints, could not be seriously believed; wherefore he condemned without pity those stories which, for more than four centuries, had delighted the Christian world. No longer might the marvellous voyage of S. Thomas to India, the exciting battle of S. James with the Magician Hermogenes, S. George's gallant rescue of a princess, or the blood-curdling tale of S. Nicholas and the salting-tub be represented in the churches. Many scenes in the life of the Virgin, and many stories of the infancy of Jesus, for centuries unquestioned, now came under suspicion and were placed beneath the ban.

In brief, the Renaissance had become a revolution, overthrowing the basic principles of earlier ages; it substituted pride for humility and the exaltation of the man for the exaltation of the theme. We rarely know the names of the artists who wrought throughout the Romanesque or Gothic centuries; the Renaissance rarely leaves us ignorant of its own. We do not know who carved the tympanum of Moissac, but we do know the names of the sculptors who carved stone cannon balls for one pope and stone garden benches for another.

We have no clue to the identity of the metallist who cast the

panels for the bronze doors of the Church of S. Zeno Maggiore in Verona, but we know that Ghiberti designed and cast those for the Baptistry in Florence; an unknown artist frescoed the vault of S. Savin in the Twelfth Century, but Correggio painted the dome of the Cathedral of Parma. We do not know who made the glass for Suger's windows at S. Denis, but we are well informed as to the Frenchman, William de Marcillat, who designed the windows for the Cathedral of Arezzo in the Fifteenth Century.

In an age which made pride the basic virtue, which rejected the idea of a Fall, of a Paradise lost by sin—which would make every man a hero, indifferent to the sentiments which make man humble but responsive to those which make him proud—only one road was left that Christian art might follow: the historic facts of the Gospel must be faced, and biblical scenes presented, in terms of reality, not as symbols or doctrines of the Church. This is the road that Rembrandt and Poussin, Protestant and Catholic, actually followed, for the Protestants were as little supported by tradition as were the Catholics. In this new age, which followed the Council of Trent, the artist must stand in debt to no man; his inspirations must spring from within himself. There might still arise, from time to time, artists who were able to interpret the Gospel story with feeling and with genius; but there was no longer a body of tradition everywhere respected upon whose wings an artist might rise to heights far beyond his own capabilities. There might hereafter be Christian artists, but there could no longer be a Christian art.

Thus the time soon came when the men of the Church saw the doors of the Middle Ages close behind them, shutting from their sight all the poetry of yesterday. The iconography of the Romanesque and Gothic centuries became as meaningless as were



the hieroglyphics on the obelisks of Egypt. Wise men thought that the secret formula for the Philosopher's Stone, which could turn base metals into gold, might be deciphered from the portals; Dubois saw evidences for the solar origin of all religions in the Zodiac of Notre-Dame; and Lenoir read the myths of Bacchus in the bas-reliefs that told the story of S. Denis.

This blindness, so curious to us, extended to the people who mistook the statues of the "Galleries of the Kings" that cross the façades of the Cathedrals of Paris, of Rheims, and Chartres, for the images of French sovereigns instead of the royal ancestors of Christ, wherefore they should be smashed by all good patriots who were through with kings.

The Age of Innocence was dead; the Paradise of Dreams was lost, and the Iconoclast, defeated in the Eighth Century, was disastrously triumphant in the Eighteenth.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> *Mâle*, Vol. III, Part II, Chap. V.



# Part One

## THE EARLY CHRISTIAN PERIOD



## Chapter One

### THE BACKGROUND OF EARLY CHRISTIAN ART

ALTHOUGH iconography eventually became a favourite child, a veritable Benjamin, of the Church, it was not regarded by the Fathers, in its infancy, with affection or even with respect; quite the contrary, they looked upon it as an undesired foundling laid upon their doorstep which the pressure of extra-ecclesiastical practice and opinion finally forced them to adopt.

These Fathers, knowing well the depths to which the cult of idols had dragged the pagan world, were emphatic in their denunciations of all images. Clement of Alexandria cited the ancient Law—"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image"; Tertullian called the arts "inventions of demons"; Origen, although less emphatic, arrays himself on the same side, and Eusebius confiscated two little statuettes, one of Jesus and one of Paul, which he found in the possession of a woman.

Not content with quoting the Law and the Prophets the Fathers drew from the pagans themselves—from Heraclitus, Strabo, Xenophanes, and Plutarch among others—in condemnation of religious art, while many bishops banished all images, even that of the cross, from their dioceses. But fulminations and prohibitions were in vain. If there was no room in the Church for Christian art it was also true that there had been no room in Bethlehem for Jesus; if He could be born in a stable Art might be born in a tomb and that, indeed, was the scene of its nativity.

Roman Law permitted the members of any faith or sect to form

a burial association, and to erect an edifice for memorial feasts or services in honour of their dead. By the payment of prescribed dues the members of such associations might provide for the proper interment of their bodies, and for the decoration of their last resting places which would be simple or sumptuous according to the dues paid in life. In such tomb-chambers Christian religious art was born under the shadows of persecution.

As might have been expected in days when the streets so often rang with the cry "*Christiani ad leones*," when the air was tremulous with farewells to the dying and with mournings for the dead, this art stressed, through a rich variety of symbols, the resurrection of Jesus and the Christian hope of immortality to comfort those who mourned and to strengthen the hearts of those who walked with Death. Therefore it cast a radiance into the darkness of the catacombs that was unknown in the costlier mausoleums of the Appian Way. There the "*Ave atque vale*" of the Roman to his dead confessed the burden of the shadow for which the old religions had no light. The contrast between the hope and the hopelessness of the two religions is recorded in the epitaphs, and sometimes in the literature—as by Catullus, who speaks eloquently for his age in his lament:

"Brother, o'er many lands, o'er many waters borne  
I reach thy grave, Death's last sad rites to pay;  
Thy funeral ashes in the grave to call, and mourn  
That ruthless fate has hurried thee away.  
Woe's me, yet now I lie all drenched with tears  
For thee, thee loved so well.  
What gifts our fathers gave the honoured clay,  
Take them, my grief they tell.  
And now forever hail—forever fare thee well."

This cry of Catullus was echoed from pagan shore to pagan shore:

*"Vale, vale; dulcissima, semper in perpetua vale."*

("Farewell, dearest; forever, for eternity, farewell.")

*"Fuisti; vale."*

("Thou hast been; farewell.")

It was very different in those underground crypts where Christian funeral torches threw fantastic and flickering shadows on the walls as men of the new faith lifted up their hearts to Him in whom there is no darkness nor any shadow of turning, and recorded their faith in One who, dying, had robbed the grave of victory and wrested the sting from Death.

"Agapè, thou shalt live forever."

"Prima, thou livest in the glory of God, and in the peace of Christ."

"Lord Jesus, remember our child."

"May my mother rest well, O Light of the Dead."

The prayer that was often repeated over "Cyriacus, sweetest son," over "My good and dearest husband, Castorinus," "My most affectionate daughter, Cresimus," and over "My dearest wife, Lucifera, who was all sweetness," has come down to us:

"Father, deliver this soul from death as Thou didst deliver Jonah from the monster, the Hebrew children from the furnace, Daniel from the lions, and Susannah from the old men. And Thee also we entreat, O Son of God, Who didst open the eyes of the blind and the ears of the deaf; Who didst heal the paralyzed, and bring Lazarus from the grave."

This prayer echoes from the walls of the catacombs; here Lazarus rises from the dead; there the paralytic goes forth with new power; here the young Hebrews stand, unharmed amid the flames; there the lions crouch at the feet of Daniel, Jonah is delivered from the whale, and Susannah is secure among the elders.

In various ways this early iconography presented Jesus as the

ground of man's eternal hope. David with his sling standing over a prostrate Goliath assures us that Christ has conquered Satan; Moses bringing water from the rock, and the woman of Samaria beside Jacob's Well, symbolize the "water that springeth up to everlasting life" in the Saviour of mankind; the Good Shepherd, with the rescued lamb upon His shoulders, illustrates the words of an ancient prayer that the dead may be borne home by "the great Shepherd of the sheep."

It was natural, however, that some of the old pre-Christian forms should appear in and with the Christian symbols; indeed, this was inevitable, partly because the Christians, coming from a pagan environment and with a pagan inheritance, were accustomed to regard certain forms as appropriate for the ornamentation of their tombs; partly because these forms had lost their former meanings—as forms have in our own day when we place the victor's wreath on the grave of saint and sinner alike—and partly because the artists; in a day when classic art was decadent, were incapable of creating a new iconography adapted to the needs of a new religion. Consequently early Christian tombs and sarcophagi are sometimes hardly distinguishable from those of the pagan world. On a sarcophagus of Arles the Dioscuri of Roman mythology appear side by side with the miracle of the loaves and fishes; peacocks, whose flesh was believed to be incorruptible, are as common on Christian as on pagan tombs; and a liturgical vase of Carthage is decorated with the Good Shepherd and a pagan sea deity.

Nevertheless, although admitting classic motives to their funeral art, the Christians endeavoured to exclude that which might be offensive to the new morality, and to give a Christian interpretation to such pagan themes as were admitted to their tombs. If, on the frescoed walls, children pick the spring roses,



reap the summer grain, gather autumn grapes, or harvest the olives, it is because these symbols of the four seasons, awakening—in the pagan world—memories of the death and re-birth of Nature, could be accepted as promises of the Resurrection.

If some tombs are decorated like the chambers of Pompeian houses, with mural paintings where sheep or cattle browse peacefully under the eyes of little genii, it is because green fields and pleasant pastures awaited all the dead who died in Christ; and if, in the cemetery of Prætextatus which dates from about 200, there are garlands of roses, stalks of grain and laurel leaves, if birds fly amid the branches of green trees where nests appear with hungry birdlings opening wide their yellow beaks, it is because such scenes give glimpses into the joys of Paradise. Ulysses bound to the mast, with the ears of his comrades sealed against the luring songs of the Sirens, symbolized Jesus in the midst of His ship—the Church—closing by His presence the ears of His followers to the lures of lust and the evil whisperings of mad desire. Orpheus, charming wild beasts with his lyre, speaks of a Christ who is able to tame the unbridled passions of the flesh. Intermingled with these pagan themes are also those that were purely Christian in their origin; for instance, the Ark is often represented, usually in the form of a small, square box, wherein a man stands with outstretched hands while a dove, with an olive or a palm leaf in its beak, flies swiftly towards the welcoming arms. Even so Jesus receives the souls of all who put their trust in Him.

Thus Christian art, beginning in the tomb where, millennia before, Egyptian art also had begun, expressed supplication for the souls of the dead or comfort for the living because of the triumph that comes through faith—faith that the Giver of life would not yield His gift at the demand of Death.

Throughout all these years the Church had been in conflict with the State; in the world, but not of it, the world's hostility had saved her from the corruption of its companionship, and such inescapable vestiges of paganism as filtered underground were transformed into symbols of the new faith. So closed the first period of Christian art.

With the conversion of Constantine a second period opens. The Church, recognized and legalized by the Edict of Milan (313 A.D.), began to flourish under Imperial protection; the confession of Christ, once dangerous, became not only safe but also expedient and fashionable, and many now turned to the new religion from motives of policy rather than from any deep conviction. Physical security from persecution having been purchased at the cost of spiritual safety through isolation, the Church issued from the darkness of the catacombs to plunge into a night of secular influences whose obscurity she had not heretofore experienced.

The first demand made upon the Church by the changing order was that of instructing the applicants for baptism in the histories and teachings of the Bible—both Old and New Testaments—with which the older generations had been familiar, but of which the congregations that now filled her aisles were abysmally ignorant. Religious art, therefore, which had hitherto been almost rigidly restricted to the symbolic representations of the hope of immortality, now became narrative and placed before the eyes of man, in frescoes, mosaics, or carvings, the records of the Old Testament together with the life of Jesus, His miracles and parables, in a variety and amplitude that was never again attained, even in the height of the Romanesque or Gothic centuries.

A second demand, equally insistent but much more difficult to meet, was that of instructing men in the essential faith and doctrine of the Church. But what was that faith and doctrine? No man knew. Throughout the years of persecution, when it had been impossible to call Councils or to formulate Creeds, conflicting currents, counter- and under-currents of belief had sprung up and spread, especially in regard to the nature and person of Christ. This was particularly true in the East where the restless, speculative, oriental mind, denied expression in the political field, turned passionately to that of theological debate.

Gregory of Nyssa draws an amusing picture of the streets of Constantinople in the Fourth Century:

"The city is full of mechanics and slaves—all profound theologians who preach in the shops and in the streets. If you ask a man to change a coin, he tells you wherein the Father differs from the Son; if you ask the price of a loaf, the reply is that the Son is inferior to the Father, and if you enquire when your bath will be ready, you are told that the Son was made out of nothing."

Blows were given, and men even killed, over a preposition—"ek" or "en"—which decided whether Jesus was "*of*" or "*in*" two natures; and the Church was nearly split in twain by the presence or absence of a single vowel—was Christ "*homousios*" or was He "*homoiousios*," was He of "same" substance or of the "like" substance with the Father? <sup>1</sup>

As soon, therefore, as the Edict of Milan made it possible the Church summoned her great Councils, defined both Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy, and formulated her Creeds; then she called upon the artists to aid in the overthrow of heresy.

<sup>1</sup> James W. Thompson, *Social and Economic History of the Middle Ages*, p. 80.

And the artists, responding, affirmed the decree of the Council of Ephesus which, in 431, entitled Mary "Theotokos"—"Mother of God"—by representing her crowned, enthroned, and encircled by an entourage of apostles and angels.

Again in many Crucifixion scenes, as on the ampoules of Monza, in a fresco of S. Maria Antiqua, and in the Bible of Farfa, they placed the sun and the moon on either side of the cross to proclaim the decision of the Council of Nicæa which declared that the two natures were united in Christ "inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, and inseparably," for the sun represented the divine, and the moon the human, nature which were together crucified when Jesus died upon the cross.

The Crucifixion scene, however, did not appear in Christian art until more than four hundred years after the death of Jesus; even then the Church was reluctant to present it, and behind her reluctance lies a curious tale.

Throughout the years of persecution the Christians had consistently avoided the representation of the cross except in secret places—on their sarcophagi and in the underground chambers of the catacombs—lest it give occasion for pagan jests and taunts. Not until the conversion of Constantine, when the emperor raised a jewelled cross in his basilica in Jerusalem, did that emblem enter the field of Christian art. Yet the Church, while admitting the cross, excluded the Crucifixion, and the reason is quite clear.

In the year 308 the Church was still struggling to survive the terrible ordeal of the last great persecution—that under Diocletian. Three years later she emerged triumphantly from that shadow, and two years after—in 313—the State, confessing complete defeat, signed the Edict of Milan and surrendered to the

Church all those legal rights that placed her on an equal plane with the ancient religions of Imperial Rome. In this swift transition from perils to power the Church could not but see the miraculous intervention of her risen Lord. Therefore she passed over His humiliations and presented Him in Majesty, as on the famous Chalice of Antioch, ruling the nations and giving His law to all the earth.

The Church could not, of course, neglect the gospel of an atoning Christ, and to teach that gospel without representing His abasements her artists suggested, without portraying, the Crucifixion by showing the Saviour, as on the ampoules of Monza, not nailed to the cross but standing between the thieves in the attitude of an "orant."<sup>2</sup> Sometimes the artists placed an empty cross between the thieves with the head of Christ encircled by a wreath on it or above it; at other times they substituted the symbolic Lamb for the Saviour, or the hand of God outstretched in benediction. Oftentimes they placed the Labarum on the cross—the XP, formed by the first two Greek letters of the name of Christ—which Constantine had blazoned on his banners. This attempt to indicate, without portraying, the Crucifixion is curiously illustrated on a Fifth Century funeral cup. Here the sacrifice of Isaac is engraved; the altar has been erected and the fire kindled; Abraham with drawn knife, and Isaac with hands bound, stand beside the altar. But the hand of God appears, pointing to the ram entangled in the thicket. Beneath this scene, in a lower register, the artist has placed the sun and moon on either side of the Labarum. The meaning is quite clear; as the

<sup>2</sup> The "orant," or "orante"—for the figure is usually feminine—familiar to the art of the catacombs—was the likeness of a woman, more rarely of a man, standing with arms outstretched in the accustomed attitude of prayer.

ram had died for Isaac, so Jesus, Son of God (declares the sun), and son of Man (so says the moon), died vicariously for all mankind.



THE SACRIFICE OF ISAAC

A Fifth Century cup, now in Boulogne, from the Christian Cemetery of Vieil-Atre, shows (below) the Christ monogram flanked by the sun and moon, a symbol of the Crucifixion. (From L. Bréhier, *L'Art Chrétien*.)

The abandonment of all evasion, and the frank portrayal of the Crucifixion, was finally forced upon the Church by a persistent heresy which, gaining ground throughout the Fifth Century, taught—in its extreme form—that Christ had never really tasted death, it was not He who hung on the cross of Calvary.



*Alinari*

# DOME OF THE ORTHODOX BAPTISTRY, RAVENNA

The Greek tradition is shown by the nude figure of Christ and the presence of the river god symbolizing the Jordan.



*Bianchi, Monza*

#### AMPOULES IN MONZA CATHEDRAL

Thirteen centuries after Queen Theodolinda placed these little ampoules in the Cathedral in Monza they furnished the clue to the Syrian tradition which parallels the Greek throughout the history of Christian Art. RIGHT: Adoration of the Magi, while shepherds wonder. LEFT: The Ascension, Jesus in an aureole borne upward by four angels.



God, these heretics said, had entered the body of a Jew, one Jesus of Nazareth, perhaps at the moment of His baptism. For three years thereafter He had moved with the feet of Jesus, spoken through His lips, and healed with His hands. But on the eve of His humiliations, before the arrest in Gethsemane, Christ withdrew from the body He had occupied and, returning to the glory of the Father, left the man of Nazareth in the hands of angry Jews. This heresy forced the Church to present the Crucifixion scene in all its humiliating details and to portray, as on a bronze cross in Siena and on a crucifix in Ravenna, the intimate connexion between Bethlehem and Calvary by placing the infant Jesus and the Virgin on one side of the cross and the Crucifixion on the other. In this way the Church affirmed to all the world that the baby born in Bethlehem was the same Jesus who had died on Calvary. Thus the Crucifixion scene, at first avoided lest it stir the mockery of pagans, then suppressed to glorify a victorious Christ, was finally forced upon the Church, and upon her artists, by the necessity of controverting a dangerous heresy.<sup>3</sup>

It was not, however, only the heresies which vexed the Church in these years when she was defining her theologies and inditing her Creeds; she was also troubled by a recrudescence of paganism which poured through her portals with the multitudes of half-believers even as the Devil, in the form of a flea, had entered the Ark beneath the tail of the ass. The shrewd Church, however, realizing that old soil must be transplanted with a tree to protect its roots, retained many of the forms and anniversaries of the pagan year, while infusing them with Christian meanings.

"The Festival of S. George in April replaced the pagan festival of the Parilia; that of John the Baptist in June succeeded the

<sup>3</sup> L. Bréhier, *L'Art Chrétien*, Chap. IV.

heathen midsummer festival of water; the Feast of All Souls in November is a continuation of a heathen Feast of the Dead; the Nativity of Christ was assigned to the winter solstice in December because that was deemed the Nativity of the Sun, and Easter may have been adapted to a similar celebration of the Phrygian god Attis at the Vernal Equinox.”<sup>4</sup>

From such pagan sources come the great candles burning in the churches at Christmas time and the persistent influence of the Sibyl, a familiar figure in mediæval bas-reliefs. To the same source we owe the posture, the holy water, and the prayer—now addressed to the Virgin instead of to Pales—which have descended to the shepherds of the Roman Campagna; while the ceremonies of Rogation Week, in England or in Italy, repeat the processions of the Ambarvalia, carrying us back to the *Fratres Arvales* and to the infancy of Rome.<sup>5</sup>

Not only were such festivals as the Saturnalia and the Lupercalia Christianized, the old gods were also summoned to bear witness for the Christian faith. In the mosaics of the two great baptistries of Ravenna, and in the ambulatory of Troyes Cathedral, the god of the Jordan appears, crowned with water leaves, to attest the baptism of Jesus.

A miniature in a Psalter shows Bythos, the Egyptian personification of “the abyss,” rising from the waves to drag Pharaoh and his chariot into the depths of the Red Sea; a muse dictates the psalms to David while Echo stands entranced by a fountain and a god, lazily extended on the ground, listens approvingly to the shepherd-poet’s harp. The little Winged Victories of pagan tombs gave birth to our familiar angels, messengers of Heaven

<sup>4</sup> J. G. Frazer, *Golden Bough*, p. 360.

<sup>5</sup> Warde Fowler, *Roman Festivals*, pp. 79 and 124; Brand, *Popular Antiquities*, p. 97.

that were unknown to the Christians of pre-Constantinian days, for the angels of the catacombs do not differ in form from the men to whom they were sent.<sup>6</sup>

This Arcadia, peopled by gods, demigods, and nymphs, is charming but very far removed from the solemnities of the Bible, and very remote from those Syrian solitudes where fell the very shadow of God. The Greek might possess the secret of grace, of delicacy, and a universality of spirit that made him kin to a larger world, but he failed to grasp the mystery, the sublimity, of the stern Hebraic conception of the divine. Thus Christian art became somewhat less Christian when it left the catacombs, when—the shadow of persecution being lifted—the Church began to bask in the warm favour of a patronizing State.

Although the Fathers might turn their eyes away from these pagan themes so long as they were confined to the tombs and to the miniatures, when they began to force their way into the basilicas, which grew in numbers after the Edict of Milan, the Church felt forced to intervene. The pressure that compelled her intervention is illustrated by such benefactors as Olympiodorus, Prefect of Constantinople who, when he erected a church in honour of the martyrs, proposed to decorate its walls with hunting scenes, with animals of all kinds fleeing before the hunters, with fish of many species being caught with hook and line, with birds, beasts, and serpents in great variety amidst woods and glades. It is illustrated again in the Church of S. Costanza (erected in Rome by Constantine as a mausoleum for his daughter), whose vaults are profusely decorated with mosaics of the Fourth Century wherein nude figures of men gather grapes from flowing vines, oxen draw the laden carts to the wine presses where other

<sup>6</sup> Émile Mâle, Vol. I, p. 51.

men, clad only in the loin cloth, dance and sing as they tread the juice from the garnered grapes.

When S. Paulinus built, in 402, several churches, he outlined his plans for their ornamentation to Nicetas, Bishop among the Dacians. Instead of the secular scenes that were usual in his day he proposed, although as a recognized innovation, to place the cycles of the Old and New Testaments on the walls, with a symbolic representation of the Trinity in the apse; this, however, he admitted would be a new departure.

Thus until well into the Fifth Century pagan and secular scenes invaded the House of God, and it was this intrusion of the profane which forced the Church to assume control of her artists, and to adopt the foundling which the burial associations had deposited at her doors. The new dispensation appeared at Clermont in the year 450 when the wife of the bishop—marriage being permitted the clergy in those days—followed the artists down the aisles, Bible in hand, dictating to them the scenes that should be represented on the walls.<sup>7</sup>

All this art, symbolic, narrative, or doctrinal, that ruled throughout the first six hundred years of Christianity was destined to a long eclipse, for the barbarian tides that overflowed all Europe from the Fifth Century onward engulfed, like a new deluge, the ancient civilizations with all their art. Instead there now appeared new forms from distant Asia, intricate, decorative patterns with swirling lines wherein the human figure had no place, complicated geometric designs with interwoven vines and floral emblems. beasts leaping on their prey, or battling with other beasts.

Thus a third period of barbaric and decorative iconography

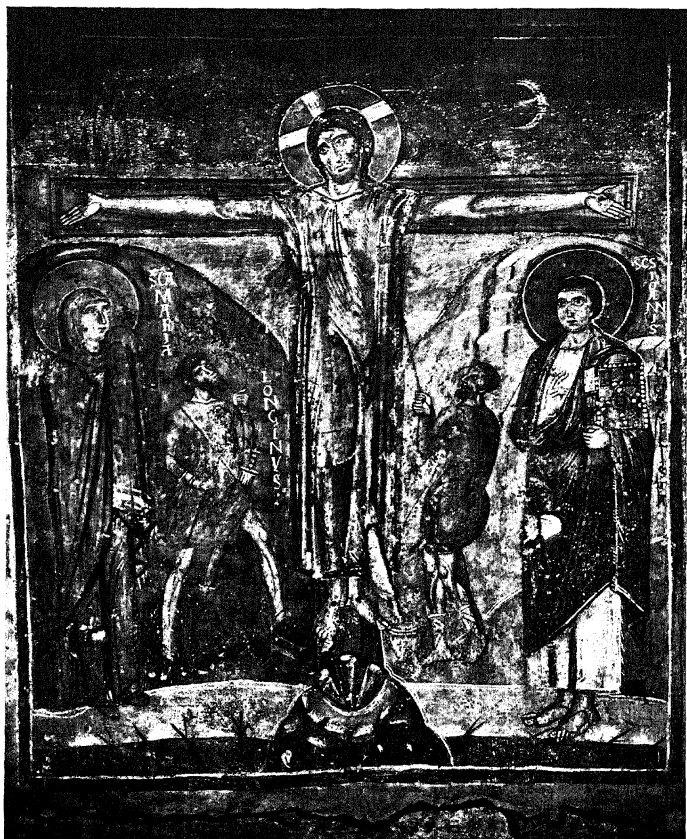
<sup>7</sup> L. Bréhier, *L'Art Chrétien*, pp. 58-59.



*Alinari*

#### DOOR PANELS OF S. SABINA, ROME

These wood carvings of the Fifth Century, done in the Hellenic spirit, show (upper left) the Magi made welcome by Jesus and His mother; (lower left) Christ ascending triumphant into Heaven; (upper right) Christ with SS. Peter and Paul, symbolizing Rome and the Church; and (lower right) the incarnate Word of God.



THE CRUCIFIXION: S. MARIA ANTICUA, ROME

*Alinari*

It is the bearded Christ of the Syrian tradition who here hangs crucified between the symbolic sun and moon (Eighth Century). He is fully clothed, despite the gospel story, because nakedness was the reproach of Noah and the evidence of Adam's sin.

succeeded the symbolism of the catacombs and displaced the art of the age of Constantine. This new art, born among the Scythian and Sarmatian tribes of Asia, enriched, as these tribes moved Westward, by elements drawn from Babylon and Greece, taught to the Goths on the Steppes of Russia, and by them carried across the Rhine, possessed all Europe until the Eleventh Century.

LOUIS BRÉHIER, *L'Art Chrétien*, Chaps. I, II, III, IV.

ÉMILE MÂLE, Vol. I, Chap. II.

## Chapter Two

### THE THREE WHO CAME WITH GIFTS

EVERY child knows the Christmas story of the Wise Men who came from the East, following a star and seeking "One who is born king of the Jews"; but the best informed of us today know less than did any son of the Thirteenth Century to whom the legends revealed so much more than the gospels do to us.

He who lived in mediæval years knew that the Magi were three in number; that they were not only wise but were also kings who wore their crowns even at night, for so he often saw them sleeping—three in one bed—as on a capital at Autun. He knew their names and their ages; that Melchior was an old man of sixty, with white hair and beard; that Balthazar was in the prime of life, forty years old, dark of skin with crisp, curly black hair and beard; while Caspar was a beardless boy of twenty, with the glow of youth in the high colour of his cheeks.

These Magi not only represented all the stages of man's life from boyhood to old age, they were also ambassadors from all the "nations that on earth do dwell," since each was lineally descended from one of those three sons of Noah by whom the Lord Jehovah had repeopled a dead world, devastated by the Deluge.

"Balthazar," "Melchior," and "Caspar" come to us again in the iconography of the Church—in her reliefs, her stained glass windows, her reliquaries, and her sacred vessels—for here the oldest civilizations of the world—Assyria and Babylon—laid



down their tributes; here also are rich gifts from the mature but younger cultures of Syria and Greece; while youthful Scythia and Sarmatia descended from the distant North to present their barbaric offerings to Romanesque and Gothic churches.

So we stop to watch them as they come from the far corners of the earth—from the North, the South, and the East: Balthazar the mature, Melchior the old, and Caspar the young.

#### BALTHAZAR THE MATURE, WITH GIFTS FROM SYRIA AND GREECE

The Christian art of early centuries, preserved by the miniatures of the manuscripts and in the lesser arts throughout the long barbarian night, reappeared in the Eleventh Century on the walls of Romanesque churches in forms that are often puzzling, and that are sometimes contradictory.

At S. Sernin, in Toulouse, Christ is represented as a beardless youth; yet elsewhere in the same cathedral He appears in the maturity of years, with the full beard of manhood. In a chapel of Amiens Christ, still bearded, wears a long garment as He hangs upon the cross; but in other Crucifixion scenes in the cathedral He is nude except for the loin cloth, while the beard has been diminished until it has almost disappeared. Sometimes Jesus is portrayed as born in poverty and Mary is chambered in a stable; but elsewhere the Virgin is sumptuously robed and royally crowned as she greets the Magi or welcomes the shepherds.

Puzzling as these contrasts are, they would doubtless have been equally perplexing to the Eleventh Century if the men of that age had thought to raise the question. It is, however, more than doubtful that any Romanesque monk gave even a passing thought to the contradictions that flowed so freely from his chisel or his brush. If the artist of Toulouse had been asked why he portrayed Jesus here as a beardless youth when He appeared

yonder as a mature man, wise with years, he could only have answered that he had taken his model from a beautiful miniature which Brother Alexius had recently brought back from Rome; but that Brother John, when he carved his Christ, had repeated in stone an image of Jesus which was engraved in damascene work on a reliquary in the Treasury of the Church. At Amiens Brother Paul might say that he had copied a little image of Christ crucified in a long robe which a pilgrim, stopping for a night, had brought from Lucca. This image (so the pilgrim said) was a replica in miniature of a statue which had been carved in wood by Nicodemus, finished at night, while Nicodemus slept, by the hands of an angel sent from heaven to complete the task, and then miraculously wafted by wind and wave to the shores of Tuscany where it was now the priceless possession of the priests of Lucca.

Brother Hermanus, however, who had carved the nude Christ upon the cross, said that the Holy Father himself carried upon his rosary just such an image as he had made. But neither Brother Alexius nor Brother John, neither Brother Hermanus nor Brother Paul, could tell you why Christ should appear now young and beardless, then bearded and mature; why he should be fully clad at Lucca and semi-nude at Rome. These artists knew, of course, that they had not created these scenes from the resources of their own imaginations; they would frankly say that they had copied the miniatures of old manuscripts in their bas-reliefs or paintings. But they did not know that, in their work, they had brought again to light forms of art that had been forgotten, except by the illuminators of manuscripts, for many hundreds of years; that they had incongruously intermingled the symbolism of the catacombs with the narrative and doctrinal iconography of the Church's three centuries of triumph and with the

purely decorative art which the Goths, taught by the Sarmatians, had brought from Asia.

Even if they had known all this they could not have answered our questions; they would merely have shifted the problem to another, and older, field. Why did the artist who carved a sarcophagus, now in the Lateran Museum, represent Christ as the Good Shepherd twice in the same bas-relief, once young and beardless and again mature and bearded? Why did Jesus wear a long robe in the Crucifixion scene painted in the apse of S. Maria Antiqua in Rome, when He is almost nude in the carvings of the Crucifixion on the doors of S. Sabina? Why should Christ, when baptized in the Jordan by John, be naked in the mosaics of the Baptistery of the Orthodox in Ravenna, and veiled by the waters of the river on the bronze doors of Pisa and on frescoed monastic walls in Cappadocia?

The more we seek the answers to these questions by examining the sources from which the art of early centuries issued, and the streams which carried it down to the Middle Ages—the altars, ivories, sarcophagi, reliquaries, mosaics, frescoes, and especially the miniatures—the more evident it becomes that part of these contrasts and contradictions spring from the fact that two racially different schools contributed to the primitive iconography of the Church. With one of these—the Græco-Roman—we have long been familiar through the frescoes in the catacombs, the sarcophagi, and the art which we call Byzantine. This school was Greek in origin, and flourished wherever Grecian influences prevailed—in the Hellenic Islands of the Ægean Sea, along the coasts of Asia Minor, in such cities as Antioch or Alexandria, and in those parts of the Byzantine Empire where the influence of Greece was strong.

If we are now able to speak with equal confidence about the

other school it is because of a little row of vials which hang from a long wire behind barred wooden shutters in the Treasury of the Cathedral of Monza. Unlike the Iron Crown in the same cathedral, which is covered with plates of gold and enriched with jewels, these little vials—made of a composite substance—have neither artistic beauty nor intrinsic worth; yet whereas the Crown, which was worn by the Lombard kings, by the lords of the Holy Roman Empire and, last of all, by the great Corsican, has memories but no messages, these vials—the famous “ampoules of Monza”—have not only memories but also many tongues wherewith they speak to us. Fragile as they are, they have yet survived the storms of nearly fourteen centuries beneath which iron and bronze have melted, stone crumbled, and empires dissolved.

As the inscriptions which Darius carved on the cliffs of Behistun in three languages—the Babylonian cuneiform text, the Persian of the Achæmenians, and the Elamitic writings of Susa—have made it possible for savants to interpret the inscriptions which record the courses of Sumerian, Babylonian, and Assyrian history; as the Rosetta Stone, inscribed in Greek, in the demotic script of the scribes, and in Egyptian hieroglyphics, enabled Champollion to read the story of the Valley of the Nile, so these little vials of Monza have unlocked the doors through which we pass into an understanding of much of the puzzling iconography of mediæval churches.

Long before the days of Chosroes or of Mohammed these ampoules were being fashioned by the monks or priests who kept watch over the holy places of Palestine. Each one was decorated with a replica of a mosaic that adorned the basilica from whence it came, and then filled with some of the oil that burned in the votive lamps that illumined the sacred shrines. Pilgrims

bought them with their gifts and thus these ampoules, brought to Italy by a certain Abbot John, were presented to Queen Theodolinda who, more than thirteen hundred years ago, gave them to the cathedral where they still repose.

These ampoules present to us no youthful, nude, or beardless Jesus; they offer us the sacerdotally clad, mature, and bearded Christ whose form, beside that of the Grecian Jesus, has so perplexed us in all mediæval iconography. But we need no longer be confused, for the vials of Monza reveal the existence of another primitive tradition, racially distinguished from the Greek, which, born in Palestine and bearing the deep imprint of Palestinian life, flowed into the Western world together with the Greek until they came to rest on the portals, capitals, and walls of Romanesque or Gothic churches.

Taken together the ampoules show us the nature of the mosaics that decorated the churches of Syria long before the armies of Arabia swept over that land. Born in the same country where the gospel had its birth, the Syrian tradition sought to interpret Jesus in the light of the customs of the people among whom He lived, and the life of the land where He had been born. They reveal in detail the Palestinian tradition whose persistent conflicts with the Hellenic conceptions interpenetrate the iconography of both Romanesque and Gothic centuries, introduce us to the Syrian mind, and place before us the figure of Jesus as the Syrian saw Him. Isolated by the peculiarities of his geography, familiar with the silences of the deserts which encircled him, more emotional than the Greek because of the long oppressions of many peoples, the Syrian's appreciation of the abyss that divides God from man was far removed from that of the Hellenic race. The Greek, always living on the highways of the seas, accustomed to the uproar of the agora where many races mingled, seeing his gods

revealed in the inconsistencies of nature, felt a kinship with his deities in their vices as in their virtues—in all the qualities of life except its power.

If, therefore, the Syrian places before us a mature and austere Christ, it is because He bears the imprint of the awful majesty of God; if He is fully clothed, even in the hour of His crucifixion, it is because nakedness was the reproach of Noah, and the evidence of Adam's sin. The Greek, on the other hand, because of his familiarity with the naked athletes who contended in the Olympic and Isthmian games, portrays a youthful and beardless Christ who is always semi-nude upon the cross.

So the Syrian and the Grecian Christs come down the centuries, side by side. It is the Syrian Christ, bearded and robed, who hangs upon the cross of S. Maria Antiqua; it is again the Christ of Syria who is revealed in the image of the Santo Volto at Lucca, in the Gospel of Rabula, in the Bible of Farfa, in many Pyrenean churches, in a chapel of Amiens, and in little leaden images, brought to light in the dredging of those English harbours where mediæval pilgrims landed on their return from Italy.<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand the Greek Christ, beardless and young, appears in the art of the catacombs, in that of Ravenna, in the mosaics of Aquileia, among countless instances in early and in

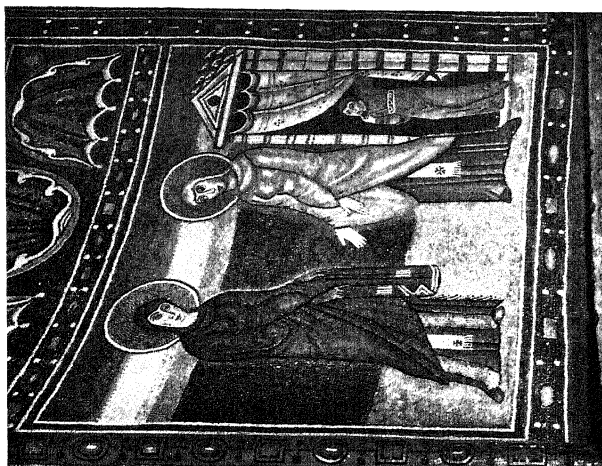
<sup>1</sup> This Christ, bearded and robed on the cross, was much more common before the Sixteenth Century when the classically minded clerics swept through the churches and replaced the Syrian by the Grecian Christ. How far the Renaissance was from understanding the works which it destroyed is curiously illustrated in many French and Italian paintings, frescoes, and miniatures wherein the crucified Jesus is given only the loin cloth while the thieves are clad from neck to feet. The Crucifixion scene in the Bible of Farfa presents a curious detail. A little circle enclosing the figure of a man holding four dogs in leash rests upon the right transverse of the cross, while a similar circle with a man and four bulls is shown on the left. Remembering that the dog was unclean to all Jewish thought, early or late, and recalling such texts as Rev. xxii. 15 ("Without are dogs, murderers, sorcerers, makers of lies"), it is probable that the dogs represent the sins of men that Jesus bore, and the bulls, His sacrifice.



LEFT: The Annunciation in the Greek tradition of Antioch. RIGHT: The Visitation in the Syrian manner of Nazareth. While the Empire stood, both forms of art flowed side by side, as above, throughout its confines.

#### APSE MOSAICS, PARENZO

*Alinari*





THE NATIVITY: STAINED GLASS AT CHARTRES

The Syrian version of the birth of Christ is triumphant at the height of the Gothic age. Mary, spent with fatigue, looks upward to the altar of sacrifice which cradles the infant Jesus.



mediæval iconography. The two traditions, however, soon flowed together and were intermingled. We find them fused in the magnificent ivory chair of S. Maximian at Ravenna and on the portals of S. Sabina where Christ hangs upon the cross, nude according to the Greeks but bearded according to the Syrians. Nevertheless, when we have once learned the lessons taught by the frescoes of the catacombs and by the ampoules of Monza the perplexing variations and contradictions of mediæval iconography, which neither the monk of the Twelfth nor the priest of the Thirteenth Century could have explained to us, become intelligible. If the work of Brother Paul differed from that of Brother Hermanus, it was because the first had a Syrian manuscript, and the second an Hellenic Gospel, before his eyes.

Turning then to the Syrian school, as revealed in the ampoules, we find—as we might expect—traces of racial habits and of Palestinian customs. In the miniatures and carvings that are descended from this school Jesus enters Jerusalem on Palm Sunday sitting sideways upon the ass, because that is the manner of the Syrian to this day; in Greek representations of the same scene He rides astride, as was the custom of the Greeks.

The Syrian Christ, in the same night in which He was betrayed, stooped to wash the disciples' feet; the Greek Christ, on the other hand, stands erect simply holding a towel on his arm; for the Hellenic artist, unwilling to present the Saviour in the attitude of a slave, preferred merely to indicate an action he was reluctant to portray. In the Syrian conception of the Ascension, Jesus, seated in an aureole of light, is borne upward by four angels; in the Greek interpretation, as given in the Gospel of Rabula and on an ivory in Munich, He climbs the escarpments of the sky, stepping from cloud to cloud with palm outstretched to grasp the welcoming hand of God: here is the apotheosis of

a Grecian hero. Of these two conceptions of the Ascension the Syrian was to triumph, but the memory of the Greek did not wholly perish; at S. Sernin there are no clouds, no hand of God extended from the heavens, but Christ stands with one foot raised as if about to take an upward step; one hand is lifted to grasp another hand which may not be seen, while two angels support Him, as if aiding Him in His ascent.

Racial emotion and racial reserve are illustrated in the representations of the Annunciation; in the Syrian portrayal Mary, risen from her seat, presses one hand against her breast as if to still the beating of a heart too deeply moved by the promise of the "Holy thing that shall be born of thee." In the Greek formula, as given in a fresco of the Catacombs of Priscilla and in the Cathedral of Parenzo, the Virgin remains seated as she listens to the angel's words, appearing incapable of movement under the weight of a mission that presses too heavily upon her. So in the Syrian version of the Visitation, as given in the ampoules and again at Parenzo, Elizabeth and Mary move forward with arms outstretched in a gesture of welcoming embrace; on a sarcophagus of Ravenna, on the other hand, the two women merely stand and face each other, guarding a dignity and a reserve that are characteristically Greek.

In the scene of the Nativity, copied on the ampoules from a mosaic of the church at Bethlehem, Mary lies in her bed, spent with fatigue and exhausted with pain, for she has just brought forth her first-born child. So the Syrians saw the birth of Jesus; to them the Nativity was the supreme miracle of the Incarnation. The Holy Ghost had come upon Mary; this must ever be affirmed; and they affirmed it by stressing the agony of the hour of birth.

The Greeks conceived the Nativity differently; they placed

Mary not in a bed but on a chair; she sat apart showing no sign of suffering. Her ordeal had been different from that of her sisters in all ages; she had not brought forth her man-child in the pain that is the common lot of women; she had been divinely chosen for the miracle of a Virgin birth and it is upon that miracle that Greek thought centred. This Hellenic conception, however, finally disappeared, leaving the field unchallenged to the Syrian, yet the mediæval artist, although he rarely showed Mary sitting in a chair, did rebel against the Syrian bed which was a simple mattress lying on the ground, for he saw in it a sign of poverty that he would gladly spare the mother of our Lord. So he raised Mary from the ground and laid her on a more honourable couch. Sometimes, as at Chartres, he placed the infant on an altar, lit by a hanging altar-lamp and revealed by the half-parted curtains of a sanctuary, that we might know that Jesus had been declared a sacrificial victim from his birth.

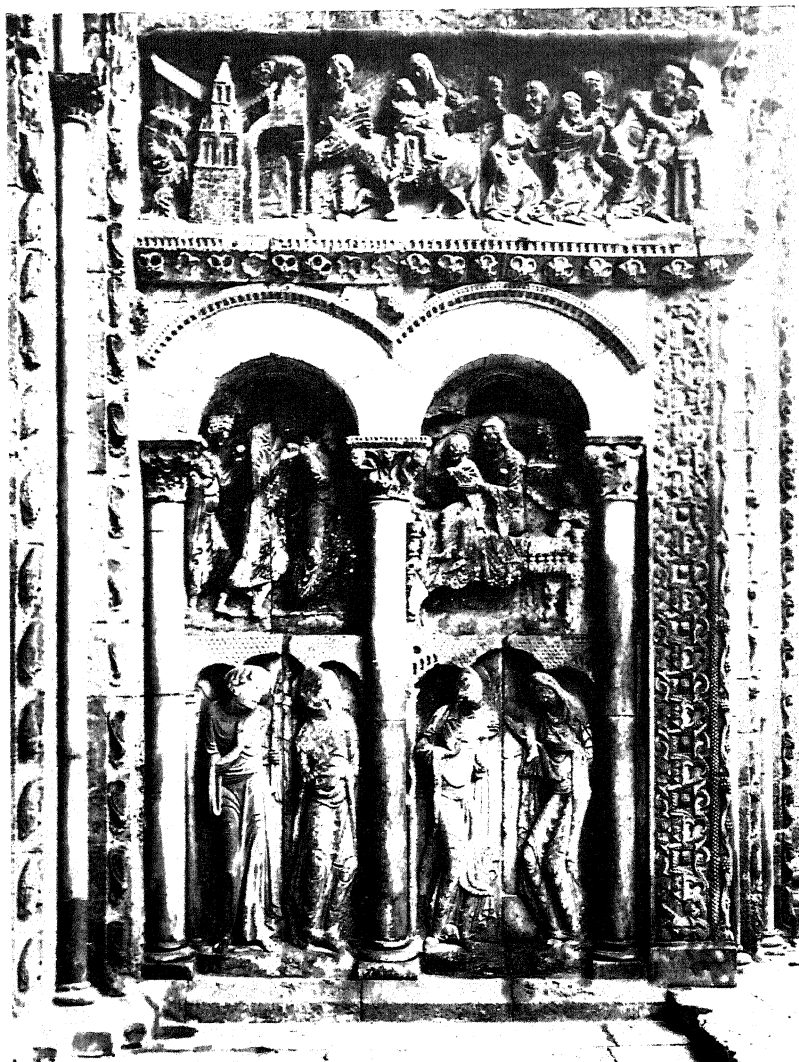
In the adoration of the Magi a very gentle touch distinguishes the Syrian from the Greek. The Syrian Mary sits erect, holding the baby on her knee; Mother and Child look straight ahead, giving no glance to the Magi who advance from the right, nor to the wondering shepherds who stand upon the left. The Virgin has given birth to the Son of God; she has, therefore, become one with the Infinite and Eternal. Yet, with the Saviour in her arms, she is the object of man's worship and the ground of his immortal hopes. So the Syrian saw her. The Greek, more human if less sublime in his conception, presented Mary in profile that she might face and greet the Magi with a gracious welcome, while the Child extends His hand in benediction. So simple a thing as this, whether the Virgin looks straight ahead or whether she is seen in profile, betrays the land of origin, whether it be Syria or Greece.

But how could Brother John know this?

Thus Brothers Paul, Hermanus, Alexius, and John followed pathways that had been blazed for them by pioneers of whom they had never heard, and gave conflicting expressions to racial characteristics of peoples who had either passed away, like the Syrians, or who—like the Greeks—had bequeathed their ideals to Byzantines from whom the entire Western world was theologically divided by a gulf as great, or greater, than that which separated the Samaritan from the Jew in the days of Christ.

But the road which these Brethren travelled was an Emmæan road; the figures which came forth from their oriental manuscripts to inspire their minds and to direct their hands, although they often made their hearts to burn within them, came so veiled that the artists never knew that he who walked with them today was the Christ of Antioch, or that he who should come tomorrow would be the Christ of Nazareth. It is only in our day that we, taught by the frescoes of the catacombs and by the ampoules of Monza, are able to understand that this is the Grecian Christ, and that the Christ of Syria.

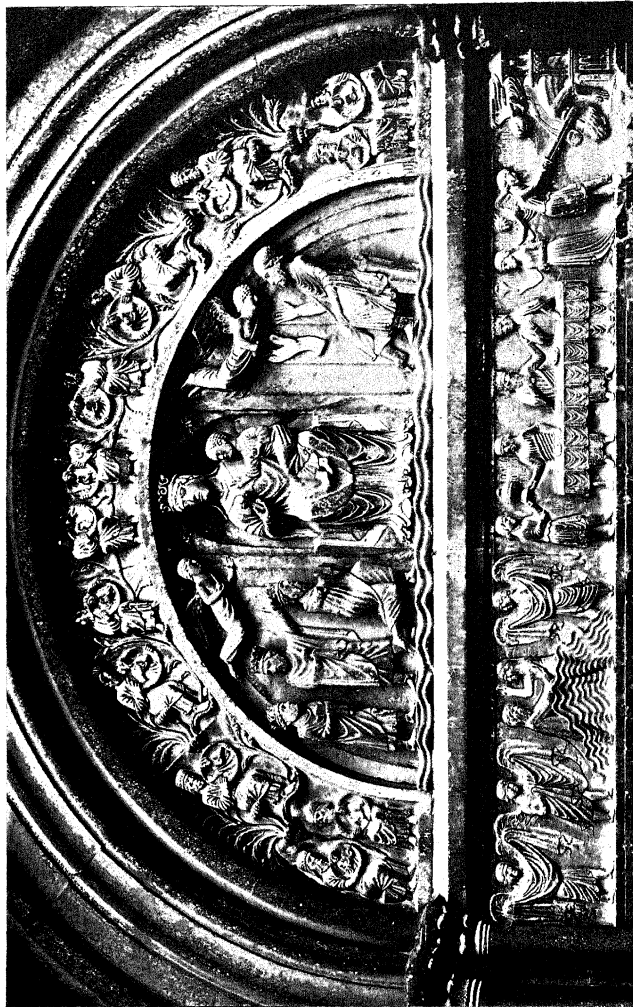
However, the glory of Greece and of Syria, their days numbered, rapidly faded as the one country shrank into a mere province of a greater empire, while the other was submerged by the waves of the Moslem invasion which, like a new deluge, covered the earth until, from the Indus to the Tagus, only Byzantium survived the Arabic wreckage of the ancient Roman Empire. Here came the arts of Greece and of Syria, fleeing from an enemy who denounced all pictorial art as idolatrous, and who worshipped God by destroying the artistic works of men. Protected by her situation, by her strong armies and mighty fleets, enriched by the greatest commerce in the world, Byzantium was able to survive the eclipse of civilization in the West by a thou-



*Princeton Univ. Lib'y.*

# PORCH OF S. PIERRE, MOISSAC: RIGHT

What the East wrought with loom, brush, or pen passed ever westward where Twelfth Century occidental monks revived and blended the themes of men centuries dead. Base, the Annunciation, the Visitation; second plane, the adoration of the Magi; top, the Presentation, the flight into Egypt.



*Pisani, Parma*

# OVERDOOR, PARMA CATHEDRAL

The Virgin of the Adoration, above, is in the Greek tradition, showing no sign of suffering. But in the Baptism, below, the bearded Christ in sacerdotal robes is Syrian. Also shown are the Miracle at Cana, the beheading of John and the fulfilment of the Old Testament Prophecies.

sand years, and to maintain in splendour the artistic traditions and the fugitive arts which had been banished from the Græco-Syrian world.

The art that thereafter flourished in Byzantium is Byzantine only in the sense that Constantinople had become a city of refuge for the sculptors or the painters who had fled before the face, or from the threat, of the invaders. There was, however, little merging of these arts; the Greek and the Syrian continued to follow each his own tradition. The one held the favour of the Emperors, of the court, and of the patrician class and flourished especially in the secular churches of the patriarchate. The more austere genius of the Syrian, on the other hand, appealing to the instincts of the monk, was adopted by the monasteries through which it was mediated to the masses of the people. Both forms of art flowed side by side through the confines of the Empire, but their currents intermingled when they crossed the frontiers on their Western way.

Thus that which the East wrought, with loom, brush, or pen passed ever westward where Twelfth Century occidental monks or priests, receiving the works of men centuries dead, revived their themes and brought them to life again on the trumeaus, the tympana, portals, façades, and capitals, in the glass of their windows, or in the frescoes of the vaults and walls of their abbeys, churches, and cathedrals.

MELCHIOR THE OLD, WITH OFFERINGS FROM BABYLON AND ASSYRIA

No cities were ever more bitterly excoriated by the spokesmen of any people than were Rome on the Tiber by the Apostles, and Babylon on the Tigris by the prophets of Israel. To S. John, Rome is the new "Babylon, mother of harlots, decked with jewels, and drunken with the blood of the Saints"; while Isaiah,

with a savage bite on his tongue, delivers the "Burden of Babylon"—"How art thou fallen, Son of the Morning! Hell from beneath is moved to greet thee at thy coming." Though the sands of her deserts at last covered her, though the lion and the lizard together kept the dismantled palaces of her kings, yet from this "fallen Son of the Morning" streams of art flowed down to the Middle Ages, bearing sumptuous decorative forms wherewith the artists of generations yet unborn adorned the aisles of their cathedrals.

On a capital in the Chapter House of S. Georges-Boscherville some forgotten sculptor carved, seven hundred years ago, the figure of a man strangling a lion in either hand. This curious figure is many times repeated from Sweden to Provence and across the Pyrenees into Spain; each time it arouses the same question: Who is this hero, and why is he present in a Christian church? He is not Samson, for Samson is always represented in quite a different guise; he is not Daniel, for Daniel owed his deliverance to other forces than those of his individual prowess. We may interrogate the Bible, the apocryphas, and the Golden Legend in vain, for the answer is not written there. The same scene and the same figure, however, appear on a bas-relief and on seals and cylinders in the Babylonian section of the Louvre, whereby we learn that this strangler of lions is Gilgamesh—the Chaldæan Hercules, destroyer of monsters—who was revered in Babylon when Isaiah denounced that "golden city, whose pomp descends to the grave, where the dead rise up to greet thee and the worms to cover thee." Yet despite the prophet Gilgamesh issues from the grave to which Isaiah had consigned him to come to life again in the decorations of Romanesque



churches. How comes he here, by what avenues has he reached the West, and by what conveyances has he travelled?

An old Persian tapestry, preserved in Sens Cathedral, answers the first question for the forceful decorative art of Babylon and Assyria, surviving their fall, was passed on to Persia who wrought the ancient themes into her tapestries. Then, when the turning Wheel of Fortune brought the Persian low and raised the Arab, when the Omayyads ruled and the sons of the Sassanids served, the caliphs of Bagdad continued the splendid traditions of the kings of Ctesiphon. Indeed, this fragile art proved more durable than the dynasties of men for, having outlived the Babylonian, the Assyrian, and the Persian, it now survived the fall of Bagdad, continuing its life through the looms of Constantinople, of Cairo, and of Sicily.<sup>2</sup>

These tapestries travelled to the West: some as presents, such as those which Haroun-al-Raschid sent to Charlemagne; others were imported through the channels of trade, while many came as the spoils of war. The banner, captured by Robert Curthose from the Saracens, has vanished from the Abbaye-aux-Dames at Caen, but another standard, wrenched from the hands of a fallen Moor on the field of Navas de Tolosa, is in the Treasury of Las Huelgas, near Burgos. The church of Apt, in Provence, preserves a very beautiful tapestry which was once a Saracenic battle flag. Very fragile now, it is never taken from its guarded resting place and only a replica is ever shown. This tapestry of Apt, more fortunate than the embroidery of Bayeux—which, in the days of the French Revolution, was barely rescued from service as a cover for a military cart—owes its preservation to the belief that it is a most holy relic, none other than the veil of S. Anne. It is about three yards in length, white, with a border decorated

<sup>2</sup> Mâle, Vol. I, p. 343.

by animal forms in bands of colour. The name "el-Mostale, Prince of Believers," barely decipherable in the weavings, may leave the tourist cold but it flames like fire in the eyes of the historian, for it was from el-Mostale that the Crusaders captured the Holy City in the year 1099. The "Veil of S. Anne" is the oldest surviving trophy of a French victory, and few there be that know of it.<sup>3</sup>

From Merovingian times onward these tapestries flowed into the West from both ends of the Mediterranean; they came from Syria and from Andalusia, from Cairo and from Cordova, from Damascus and from Seville. Dagobert covered the walls and arcades of S. Denis with tapestries whose threads of silk interwoven with gold formed a background for floral designs wrought in pearls. In many churches they lined the aisles, hung between the columns, costumed the priests, and covered the relics. Western artists, seeing these splendid weavings in the churches, on the shoulders of the priests, and over the sacred relics, caught an inspiration and, since the Church herself had so esteemed them, began to reproduce their themes in stone or glass.

Among the more graceful of these are the two animals *affrontés*, often with a tree between them. This tree figures in the art of the ancient civilizations of Asia, for the sacred writings of Babylon refer to two celestial trees, one of Life and the other of Truth, which stood, each with its sleepless guardian, before the dwelling of the gods. Persia, borrowing from Babylon, also had her sacred tree which grew near a holy spring, was protected by watchful sentinels, and healed by its sap all evils of body or of soul. What Persia borrowed she passed on to the conquering Arabs who saw here the tree of their own Paradise. In the hands of the weavers of tapestries the Tree became a

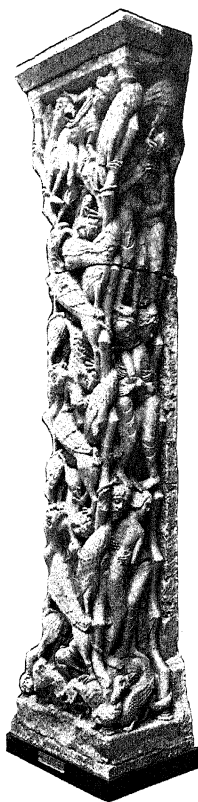
<sup>3</sup> Mâle, Vol. I, p. 343.



*Princeton Univ. Lib'y.*

SHROUD OF S. VICTOR, SENS CATHEDRAL: DETAIL

Gilgamesh of the Chaldees, strangler of lions, was carried from Eastern looms into Merovingian Europe and there copied in more durable materials. The tapestry above has survived as an ecclesiastical relic.



*Archives Photographique—Paris*

ANIMAL PILLAR, SOUILLAC ABBEY CHURCH

Beasts and men are barely to be distinguished in the intricacies of this famous design. It was transferred into late-Romanesque art from copies of illuminated manuscripts of Mesopotamia, where it had served as a divider between parallel book entries.

simple ornament, a stalk crowned by a palm leaf, and in this form the ancient Babylonian symbol entered Romanesque iconography to become the Tree of the Forbidden Fruit in that primeval garden where the Lord God walked in the cool of the day and talked with men. Thus in the representations of the Fall, as Adam and Eve listen to the serpent coiled in the branches of the tree, we hear whispering voices from those "waters of Chebar" where, when Israel was exiled in Babylon, the word of the Lord came to Ezekiel and the hand of God was laid upon the son of Buzi.<sup>4</sup>

Then, borne on magic carpets of Bagdad, the same tree came down the centuries to the artists of France who placed it between the two animals *affrontés*.

It is, M. Mâle tells us, almost with a feeling of dismay that one descends the street of some small provincial town of France, with its grey stone houses and roofs of red tile, to enter the little village church and find oneself confronted by the tree over which the lions still keep their ancient watch and ward. Here one stands before a symbol which bears witness to the faith of a distant past, carved first by artists dead and long forgotten amid the dust that lies beneath the dust that covers ancient Babylon.

The guardians of the tree, however, are not always lions. Artists of later date, strangers to the original significance of those forms which symbolized the attributes of courage and of power, began to place what figures pleased their fancy beside the tree, thus keeping to the letter, where they were ignorant of the spirit, of their theme.

In many churches of these centuries there appeared also the double-headed eagle; he is in the carvings of Moissac, of Vienne,

<sup>4</sup> Ezekiel i. 3.

and in many other places. But long before Moissac, the eagle with two heads was the emblem of Shirpurla (Lagash), one of the oldest of Babylonian cities. It was he who aided Gilgamesh in his adventures with the monsters of his time. The Hittites, inheriting the symbol, carved it on the rocks of Cappadocia; in their turn the Moslems, fallen heir to the royal bird, inscribed it on their towers of Diyarbekir and wove it into their battle flags. But the double-headed eagle also reached the West with oriental tapestries where it perched on the Austrian heraldic crest. Wherefore it came to pass that when the Turks sailed into the battle of Lepanto they saw, flying from the galleys of Don John of Austria, the old eagle of Shirpurla which had once flown over Moslem fleets and armies. But now he, under whose wings they had so often conquered, turned and drove the Crescent, with beak and talon, before the prows of Christian ships.

Some of these grotesques summed up, for the ancient world, the forces of living nature; they represented the half-gods who, possessing speed, thought, and force, stood between man and his deities. Therefore the Assyrian and the Babylonian engraved them on their seals, embroidered them upon their garments, and carved them on their architecture.

This is the origin of the winged sphinx, often present in Romanesque carvings. The Persians, receiving the figure, passed it on through Byzantium to the West, and through Bagdad to the South, where the Moslems welcomed this winged beast with a woman's head, seeing in it the mare that bore Mohammed from earth to heaven. Sometimes the sphinx is masculine and resembles those winged figures of bulls or lions which, bearded and often crowned, guarded the palaces of Nineveh, of Khorsabad, and of Persepolis.

Sassanid tapestries, woven by artists who knew well these

guardians of Assyrian or Achæmenian palace gates, travelled the ancient routes of trade, through the cities of the Byzantine or the Arab, to reach at last the Romanesque artists who carved their themes upon the portals, walls, or capitals of Western churches. Along roads travelled by the Goth, by "Syrian" merchants, or by Christian pilgrims came also the birds with their long, interlacing necks; monsters with two heads on one body or with two bodies and a single head; beasts of prey leaping upon their quarry—the lion upon the bull, the leopard upon the deer, or the eagle on the hare. Hence came also the superimposed beasts who fight with beak or fang, with claw or talon, on the column of Souillac. Such scenes are carved on Babylonian cylinders or in Assyrian intaglios, and one may see them in the Louvre.

These victories of the lion, eagle, or griffon may once have had a religious significance, but the makers of tapestries, when they copied the ancient motives, probably saw nothing but the possible beauties of the lines, and it was for the same reason, and also because these figures might be twisted to fill awkward corners of their compositions, that the Romanesque artists adopted those grotesques.

The column of Souillac illustrates another source from which Western artists drew their inspirations, for the Bibliothèque Nationale preserves a Tenth Century Gospel, copied from an older manuscript which was illuminated in Mesopotamia, whose canons (tables giving the cross references between the gospels) are written in parallel sections, each separated from its neighbour by a column, two of which are decorated with the figures of superimposed and battling birds or beasts.

The columns which frame the canons of Syrian gospels, some of which date from the Sixth Century and still exist, are also responsible for those that rise from the backs of crouching lions

on Lombard porches, for the theme which the mediæval Italian carved he borrowed from oriental manuscripts. What Syria thus transmitted to the West she had herself received from the monasteries of Mesopotamia, whose monks saw daily the ruins of old palaces whose columns were supported by the images of those beasts which had provided the royal support of Babylonian or Assyrian kings. Other Lombard porches present columns so carved that they seem to have been knotted together in the centre, and the same theme, the same kind of columns, appear in a Byzantine manuscript now preserved in the Vatican Library. Such forms of art might pass unchallenged, but the grotesques—the half-human bodies and the double-headed animals—stirred the anger of S. Bernard who denounced them with trenchant vigour. "For God's sake," he wrote, "even if one is not ashamed of such absurdities, why is he not distressed at the cost of them?" Many of the grotesques that the saint so caustically assailed were wrought into the tapestries that covered the relics of the saints, and the reliquary which at last enshrined the bones of the great Abbot of Clairvaux was wrapped about with an exquisite fragment of oriental weavings which was decorated with the same forms that S. Bernard, living, had so vehemently condemned.

Even to us today such denunciations would appear quite justified were it not for the fact that these grotesques had a meaning to which S. Bernard, and his age, were blind; they spoke a language they did not know, and were survivals of a civilization that was, in its day, as rich and varied as their own. But that which commends the grotesques to us would have utterly damned them in the eyes of the Eleventh Century; beyond doubt the entire Church would have rallied to the cause of S. Bernard had she known—as we know now—that these fantastic monsters



were legacies from the paganisms of ancient Asia, that they paraded before Christian eyes, in Christian churches, the gods, demigods, the spirits and demons of a heathenism that was centuries old when Abraham went forth from Ur of the Chaldees. Doubtless solemn ecclesiastics, in copes and mitres, with bell, book, and candle, with much sprinkling of holy water, and lengthy exorcisms, would have cast out these devils whom they had ignorantly invited into their holy places.

But for us, who know history better, there is nothing childish or unclean in these queer birds and beasts; on the contrary they seem marvellously poetic, charged, as they are, with the dreams of many races; handed down, as they have been, from civilization to civilization, from conqueror to conqueror; travelling, as they have travelled for thousands of years, the ancient roads that warrior-kings have trod—the roads that follow the pathway of the sun from East to West.<sup>5</sup>

CASPAR THE YOUNG, WITH BARBARIC GIFTS FROM SCYTHIA AND  
SARMATIA

In the Fifth Century frontier lines, centuries old, began to bend and break beneath the pressure of invading Asiatic hordes. The Alps no longer barred the Herulians or the Ostrogoths from the Latin South; the Rhine ceased to divide the Germany of Ariovistus from the Gaul that Cæsar won, and the steep escarpments of the Pyrenees opened their passes to Visigothic tribes who came to rule the lands from Toledo to Toulouse.

Another frontier line, less visible but no less real, also slowly faded out beneath the trampling of rude shod feet and two sharply contrasted ideals, girded for battle, faced each other across that vanishing boundary line. On one side lay the classic

<sup>5</sup> Mâle, Vol. I, p. 363.

art of the Mediterranean, an art that sought harmony of line, simplicity, grace, and fidelity to nature; on the other side stood one that was purely decorative in which bizarre designs, geometric patterns, swirling and twisting lines interlaced into complicated mazes wherein the human form had little if any place, and where those of animals were deliberately distorted for the sake of new decorative values.

Before the year 700 the battle had been fought and the issue determined; the symbolism of the catacombs, together with the old stories of the Bible, the doctrines and the creeds, vanished from the walls and portals of the churches to be replaced by an exuberance of geometric patterns, by intricate designs, by embattled beasts, queerly twisted animal forms, by rosettes, wheels, spirals, and roses or daisies with six petals.

This decorative art appears not merely in the carvings; it appears also on the altars, the sarcophagi, and on the sacred vessels—the reliquaries, crosses, *châsses*, chalices, patens, and on the jewelled covers of the Gospels. For instance, the coffer of S. Maximian at S. Maurice d'Agaune, and that which Pepin le Bref gave to Conques, are decorated with large pieces of coloured glass (sometimes precious stones, emeralds, sapphires, or semi-precious stones like garnets were used instead)—all linked together by rows of small pearls on a background of cloisonné work.

There is also a kind of damascene work—thin lines cut by a burr into a metal plate wherein leaves of gold or silver were hammered down until the lines were filled; then the borders were smoothed over and the surface polished.

This art, making no appeal to the mind but only to the eye, invaded Europe obliterating, as it advanced, the older classic

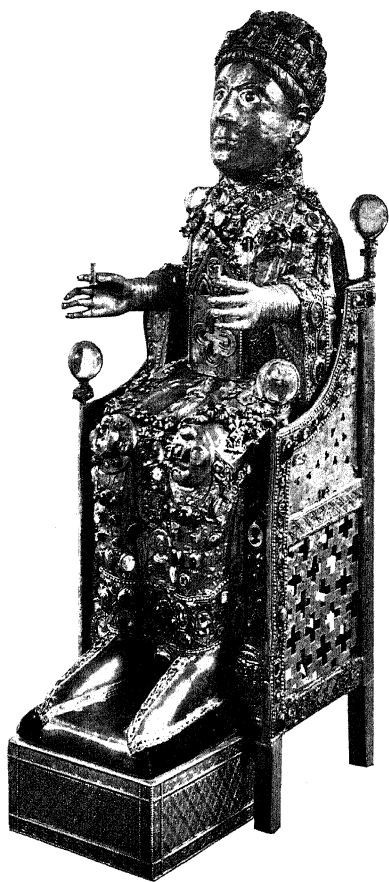
forms and ideals of Greece and Rome. Where did it originate, and by what roads did it reach the West?

Whether it is a mere coincidence, or whether it is something more, we have yet to determine, but the fact remains that in far-off Siberia and in Central Asia the turtle-back-shaped tombs of Scythian and Sarmatian chiefs, with the graves of the less distinguished, have yielded armour and weapons—breastplates, swords, scabbards, belts—as well as articles of personal adornment—rings, ear-rings, clasps, buckles—which anticipate the decorative forms and the *cloisonné* or *damascene* work of Merovingian and Carolingian centuries in Western Europe. On these we find the “cabuchons”—the large pieces of coloured glass, or the jewels, set in *cloisonné*; we also find the figures of animals, sometimes embattled but always twisted into decorative lines; here are the same bizarre patterns, the geometric designs, the capricious swirls and curves, the rosettes, wheels, screws, and the six-petalled roses or daisies. How far these forms were native to these Asiatic barbarians, to what extent they were borrowed and adapted from those earlier civilizations which they admired and attacked, are questions for archæologists to determine. However, we know that they were familiar to the Scythians in the Sixth Century before Christ, since we find them in their tombs. We also know that the Sarmatians dwelt for a time in close contact with Hellenes; settled on the shores of the Black Sea, from whom they took such classical motives as the *rinceau* (branching, curving scrolls of gracefully carved foliage) and the *acanthus* leaf. We know further that they camped for years along the borders of Persia where they received inheritances from Assyria and Babylon. It appears altogether probable that this barbarian art drew heavily from that of the older, and more cultured, peoples of the South, for the embattled animals, the twisted serpents,

the double-headed eagle, and the misformed monsters also appear in the decorative art of the Tigris valley. Many other themes that characterize the barbarian art of Asia—the interlacing ribbons, interwoven braids, and cruciform bands—decorate Chaldean monuments that date from the third millennium before Christ.

Of course it is also possible that an artistic theme, like a religious myth, may have had an independent origin with different peoples, wherefore it is not easy to determine how much of this curious art originated among the barbarians and how much of it was taken from the older and more civilized races with whom they had many contacts, in peace or in war, through trade or through conflicts. However, this much is clear: these barbarians were not mere copyists. Whatever they created or borrowed from other races they infused with a verve, a wealth of imagination, a delight in the fantastic, with a feeling for colour and a decorative instinct, which was unknown to the Roman or the Greek, which only the Arab could equal but which even he rarely could excel.

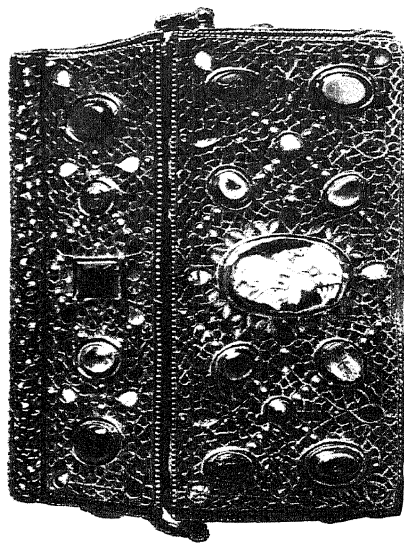
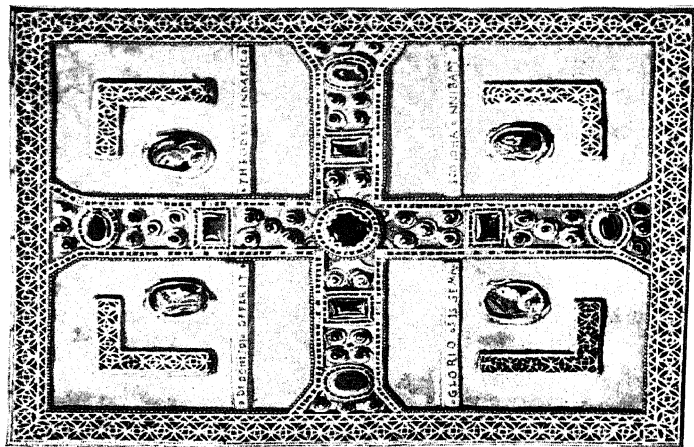
The sun of the Scythian day had set a hundred years before Christ was born but it rose again on the equally zoomorphic and decorative art of the Sarmatians in Central Asia. These wandering tribes, moving ever Westward with their flocks and herds, entered the plains of Southern Russia where, in the Third Century of our era, they came in contact with the Goths who, two hundred years later, broke through the Imperial barriers and overran the Roman world. These tribes in their various branches,—Herulian, Goth, Ostrogoth, or Visigoth,—learning as best they might what the Sarmatian had to offer, carried this Asiatic art over the Alps into Italy; Germanic tribes in Central Europe, receiving it, carried it across the Rhine into Gaul. Here they re-



*Archives Photographique—Paris*

RELIQUARY OF S. FOY, CONQUES

A lavish piece of goldsmith's work (Eighth Century). In all probability this art, appealing only to the eye, not the mind, invaded the West from the turtle-backed tombs of barbaric chiefs on the Steppes and in Central Asia.



#### GIFTS FROM THE BARBARIANS

Symbolism and Bible story in art have given way to the decorative as such. LEFT: Cover of an evangeliary of Theodolinda. RIGHT: Reliquary from Agaune S. Maurice, Switzerland.

ceived some forms which the Gallic tribes had inherited and preserved from those prehistoric races which had occupied the land throughout the Hallstatt Period (900-500 B.C.) and La Tène (500-1 B.C.) when the use of bronze was giving way to that of iron. Many of the themes which we associate with these barbarian invaders, especially those which they had inherited from Assyria, Babylon, or Persia, also reached Western Europe with the articles of trade which were carried by Levantine merchants—traders from Egypt, Syria, or Asia Minor—who formed trading colonies in the coastal cities and along inland waterways. They travelled the roads from Italy through Gaul to Spain, and even crossed the Channel to Britain. It is therefore not always easy to determine whether themes which had a common origin in Mesopotamia, or in the neighbouring countries, were brought to Europe by "Syrian" merchants or by Gothic warriors, but from whatever source they were derived this decorative art possessed all Europe between the Fifth and the Ninth Centuries in a wide diffusion, as is evidenced by the tombs which cross the continent from Scandinavia to Spain, from Ireland to Lombardy, and from Gaul to Hungary.

It even influenced the masonry, for the builders, unable to cut or handle heavy stones, built their walls with smaller stones in decorative designs that often imitated the network figures of barbarian goldsmiths. In the masonry of the Merovingian crypt at Jouarre alternate bands of small stones are cut in squares, in diamond or polygonal forms, which bring to mind the patterns in barbaric jewellery. Stone "cabuchons" decorate the walls of the Baptistery of S. Jean at Poitiers, and geometric designs, akin to the work of barbarian jewellers, are wrought into those of the Basse Œuvre at Beauvais.

For over four hundred years this barbarian art remained con-

quering and supreme. Then, quite suddenly, the old symbolism was revived; the ancient credal and narrative art reappeared while that of the barbarians, so long triumphant, fell into the background to serve its servants of yesterday—the art of the catacombs and of the days of Constantine. But it still existed and it still exists, for what the Scythians and Sarmatians wrought the Goths passed on and new “Gothic” centuries received. So it comes to pass that we in America, who dwell half the world away, inherit that which we do not understand from those who lie in Siberian tombs where, more than two millennia ago, barbarians buried their dead with the weapons of their wars and their huntings, with the ornaments they wore in life to delight the eyes, all enriched with “cabuchons” and cloisonné.<sup>6</sup>

So in our churches, bathed in the smoke of an unfamiliar incense, echoing the praises of a God whose Holy City they had repeatedly taken, whose treasures they had often sacked, stand the Assyrian and the Babylonian; the Hittite and the Egyptian; the Latin and the Greek; the Persian and the Arab. Here, too, stand the Scythian and the Sarmatian. By these the ancient promise is fulfilled:

“All the ends of the earth shall praise Him; continents and isles shall wait upon Him, and peoples of strange tongues shall bring their gifts to Him,” even as Balthazar, Melchior, and Caspar brought their gold, their frankincense, and their myrrh to a baby born in Bethlehem.

<sup>6</sup> The great cross behind the pulpit of the Brick Presbyterian Church in New York City, with its “cabuchons” and cloisonné-like border, bears a close resemblance to the barbaric patterns on the Gospel of Theodolinda in the Cathedral of Monza.

ÉMILE MÂLE, Vol. I, Chaps. I, II and IX.

LOUIS BRÉHIER, *L'Art des Barbares* in *Histoire Universelle de l'Art; L'Art Chrétien*, Chaps. VII and VIII.



## Chapter Three

### BYZAS OF BYZANTIUM

WHEN, about the year 660 B.C., Byzas of Megara led his fellow Greeks across the Ionian Sea to found a new city where the Black Sea flows into that of Marmora, no Oak of Dodona at the vessel's prow warned him that he was sailing into a fame that should be more enduring than the "bars of brass" of which Horace sang. Yet by that voyage Byzas gave his name to an empire that survived the fall of Rome by more than a thousand years, to a city that still endures, and to an art which has spread to countries of which he never dreamed, and to unknown continents half an unknown world away.

The city that Byzas founded was a commercial centre whose citizens gave little thought to other interests than those of pleasure and of trade. In fact the early Byzantines seem to have borne a reputation for idleness, for profligacy, and for a patriotism so feeble that, when invaders threatened, the cooks and the cook-stoves had to be mobilized upon the ramparts before the defenders could be persuaded to take their stations on the walls.<sup>1</sup>

Throughout a thousand years Byzantium remained essentially unchanged, a city on the highways of commerce but on the byways of culture, whose stony soil gave little promise of the artistic skill that should carry the fame of the Byzantine to the ends of the earth. Although this art, to which Byzas stood unconscious godfather, eventually received gifts from all the East-

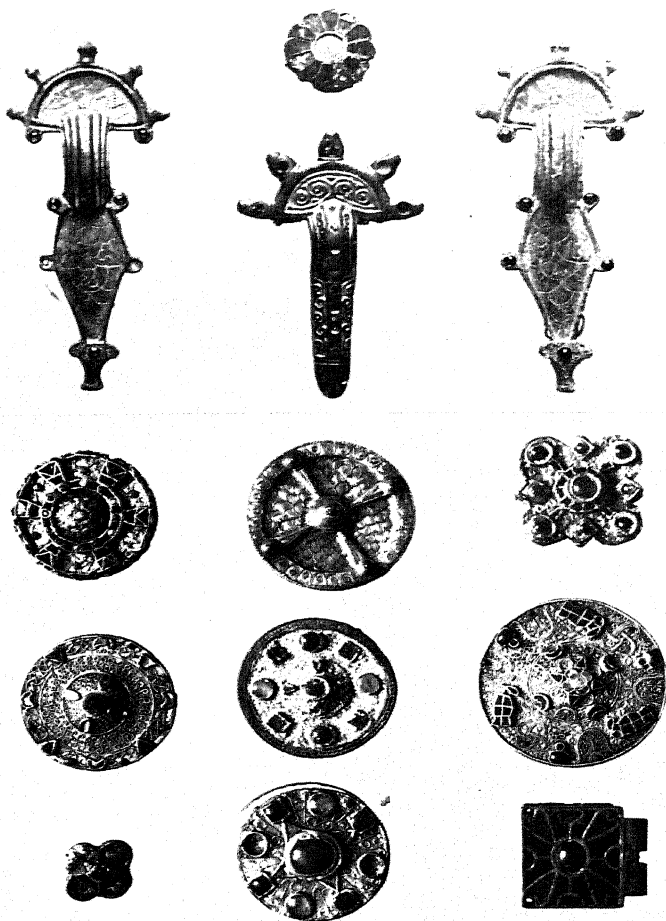
<sup>1</sup> "Byzantium" in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

ern world, neither he nor his people enriched it with anything except the name—"Byzantine." In fact the only gift they gave to any art was that of the crescent which the citizens of the Fourth Century before Christ stamped upon their coins in gratitude to "torch-bearing Hecate" who, by a flash of lightning from a cloudless sky, revealed to the watchers on the walls the menace of Macedonian armies stealthily advancing under cover of the night. Centuries later the Turks adopted the crescent, once the emblem of Hecate, and placed it upon their battle flags.

Not until the Latin succeeded the Greek, the Christian supplanted the pagan, and Constantinople replaced Rome did Byzas come into his unearned own, for while the Roman might be able to drive the memory of the Megarian from the city he had founded he could not thrust him from the field of art (in which Byzas had no interest) wherefore we speak of Byzantine, never of Constantinopolitan, art.

With the coming of Constantine to the Bosphorus Byzantium, for the first time in her thousand years of history, became more than an entrepôt for the merchants of Asia and the markets of the West. For another thousand years, or more, she was to be the capital of a great empire, a centre of university life and culture, the seat of ecumenical councils that long influenced the thinking of the continent, and the home of an art that furnished models to all Europe, even to distant Ireland and Scandinavia.

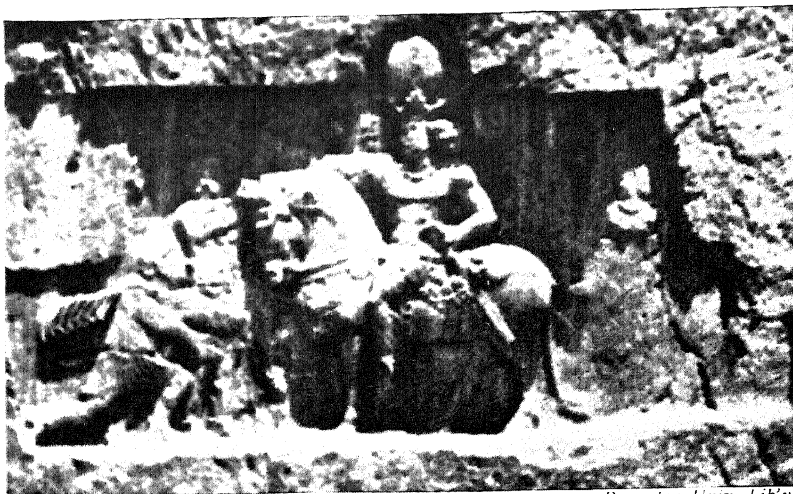
Protected by the sea, and dominating it, Byzantium could offer those who dwelt within her gates a security unknown in the West, while her situation on the cross-roads of the Eastern world made her the goal of caravans that followed the ancient trade routes from India and China, as well as of the ships that sailed to the Persian Gulf from the islands of the East, from the coastal cities of Asia, perhaps from far Japan. The volume of trade thus



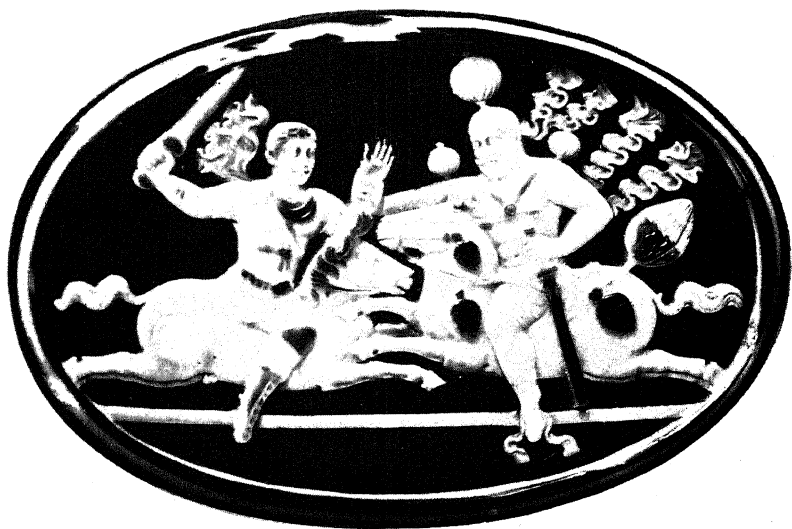
# JEWELLERY FROM S. GERMAIN EN LAYE

*Giraudon*

Examples of an instinct for decorative values unknown by the Greeks and Latins. These clasps and brooches were wrought by Gallic tribesmen immediately following the fall of Rome.



*Princeton Univ. Lib'y.*



*Giraudon*

#### THE PERSIANS COME

Shapur defeats Valerian. ABOVE: A relief near Persepolis. The Roman Emperor kneeling before his Persian conqueror. BELOW: A carved cameo showing Shapur about to make the capture.

poured into the capital offered its citizens opportunities for adventure and for wealth that equalled, if they did not exceed, anything Imperial Rome had known even in her most opulent days. Inevitably the artists of the world were drawn, as by a compelling magnet, to the new city beside the Golden Horn.

Mæcenas' need of Horace was, perhaps, no less than that of the poet for his patron, nor was Justinian less dependent for his fame upon the skill of his provincials. His boast beneath the newly risen dome of Sancta Sophia, "I have surpassed thee, O Solomon," could never have been uttered had it not been for Anthemius of Tralles and Isadore of Miletus who hung that mighty dome above the nave.

In later years other provincials enabled the successors of Justinian, of his nobles and high ecclesiastics, to glorify God and perpetuate their own memories by the erection of other churches, each with its rich mosaics, its coloured marbles, tapestries, chalices or patens of gold, its treasures of jewelled vessels, and its curiously carved cancelli or transennæ.

Nor were the emperors content merely to create new beauties for their city; they laid tribute with a heavy hand upon the ancient world, bringing to Constantinople those works of art which had made Greek temples famous—the Athene Promachos of Phidias, the Cnidean Venus of Praxiteles, the Herakles of Lysippus, and the column of twisted serpents which the cities of Greece presented to the shrine of Apollo at Delphi after the victory of Platæa. The models such works of art supplied, the high ambitions of rulers and people to exceed all builders of all time, and the wealth that flowed through all Byzantium's avenues of trade sounded like the Sirens' song to artists, drawing them from all corners of the three continents that made up the known world—from Europe, Africa, and Asia.

Not least, in its day and way, was the gift that came from Europe through Rome, for Constantine—when he left the Tiber for the Bosphorus—brought with him the memories of the architectural splendours of the city of the Antonines, and under the spell of that memory sought to revive the old magnificence. To that task he and his successors brought the same organizing genius that Rome had shown in the creation of the State, in the welding and wielding of the legions, and in the administration of the Empire. Here they ran the long arcaded streets bordered by palaces and fora, with their triumphal arches and columns. Aqueducts, similar to those whose cream-coloured piers still cross the Roman Campagna, brought water into the city; the Circus Maximus came to life again in the magnificence of the Hippodrome; basilicas, both secular and religious, repeated forms with which Rome had been long familiar.

Nevertheless, although the organization was Latin the art so organized was Greek—Greek in its logic, Greek in its restraints, Greek in its fidelity to nature, and Greek in the quality of its conceptions. But it did not, and could not, remain wholly Greek. Had Constantinople faced only west and south, had the city looked only towards Rome on the one hand and towards Antioch, Smyrna, Ephesus, and Alexandria—all strongholds of Hellenic culture—on the other, her task would have been easier, for it would have been the accustomed one of giving direction to an art whose details, whose rhythms and proportions, came from the Grecian world. But Constantinople lay at the cross-roads where East met West; not only the East of distant Asia which knew her only as the shadowy goal of caravans, but a nearer Asia, composed of strong, militant states whose power Rome had good reason to respect and Persia proudly to remember, for on his tomb near Persepolis Shapur, royally mounted, has looked down

for better than sixteen centuries upon a captive Roman Emperor, Valerian, kneeling at his feet.

The Byzantine drew his inspirations not merely from his enemies and his allies, nor from the loyal provinces of his empire; he drew them also from those districts which, taking quick advantage of Rome's declining power in the Third Century, had become disloyal—from the hinterlands of Syria, Anatolia, Cappadocia, and Mesopotamia whose people, lying beyond the reach of Roman fleets, swiftly threw off the alien arts of Greece and Rome. Here a fervent, reborn nationalism called again into being the old, indigenous art. Nor was this art purely pagan and secular for here, where imperial edicts ran but slowly, churches had arisen and prospered even in those years when Christians in other parts of the Empire lay beneath the shadows of persecution. The province of Adiabene, lying along the eastern banks of the Tigris, possessed Christian churches and a Christian art at a surprisingly early date. There was, for instance, a large and important church in Arbela, the capital city, in 126 A.D.—perhaps only a quarter of a century after the death of the last of the disciples who had walked with Christ.

Shapur, the Sassanian conqueror of Valerian in 260 A.D., brought many captives from Antioch and Nisibin to Babylonia and Susiana where, under the protection of Persian monarchs, Christianity flourished.

The churches and, at least after 325 A.D., the monasteries thus stretching westward from the borders of Persia towards the coast formed a channel through which a steady stream flowed, bearing on its tide the arts of Assyria and Babylon, inherited and enriched by Persia who also received from nomadic Asiatic tribes treasures of tapestries and textiles.

At Antioch, and other cities on or near the coast, this Asiatic

current intermingled with the Hellenic stream that flowed northward from Alexandria, receiving reinforcements from other centres of Grecian culture on its way, and thus the two streams flowed together towards the Golden Horn. One of these, that which came from Persia and the East, was largely decorative in character, consisting mainly of geometric or floral patterns, sometimes of animal figures, but avoiding representations of the human form. The other stream, flowing from the Hellenic world, was essentially narrative; seeking to tell a story, it represented men, women, or gods in action. But is it possible for us to pass beyond the mountains of the Hellenic world, beyond the high plateaus of Asia, and find the more remote springs wherein these streams of art first rose?

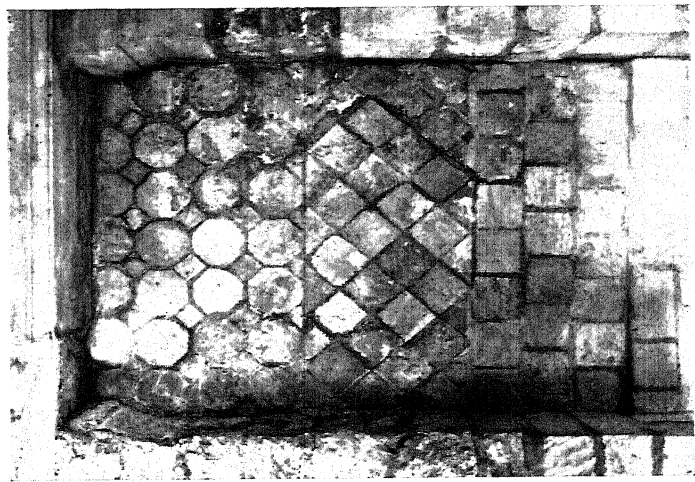
Strzygowski is but one of many archæologists who believe, and the suggestion is both plausible and fascinating, that all "representational" art, in which the human figure plays so large a part, is descended from that primitive world in whose mists and shadows prehistoric man lived his own life and wrought out our inheritances. In that far day magic occupied the place in the thought of men that science does in ours. By means of magic, man, imitating the processes of Nature, could compel her favours.

If rain were needed he placed a stone in the higher branches of a tree to represent the clouds, beat a drum to imitate the rolling echoes of the thunder, and threw sand into the air whose falling grains mimicked the falling drops of rain. These things done, he had but to wait the gathering clouds, the mutterings of thunder, and the patter of the rain. His actions had had compelling power over Nature.<sup>2</sup>

If food were needed and game was scarce the hunter painted

<sup>2</sup> Frazer, *Golden Bough*, Chap. V.

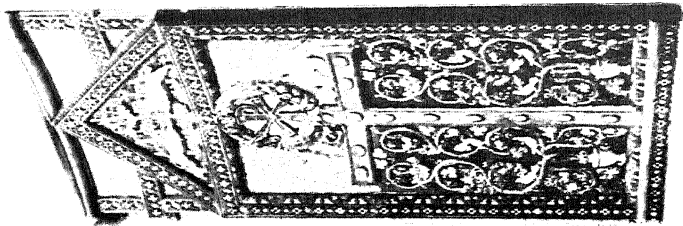


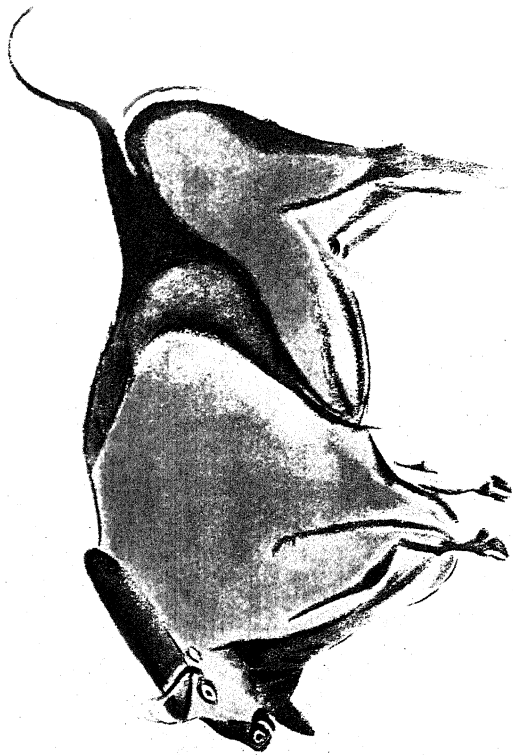


*Grandon*

# THE BARBARIANS ONCE MORE.

LEFT: Eastern goldsmiths' designs copied in the courses of Western stonework. Masonry from the Merovingian crypt at Jouarre.  
 RIGHT: Cross from the chancel, Brick Presbyterian Church, New York. Theodolinda's Gospel at Monza shows like designs, already ancient over thirteen hundred years ago.





*American Museum of Natural History*

#### MAGDALENIAN CAVE PAINTING

According to many archaeologists all "representational" art derives from primitive man's mystical belief that, by means of realistic portraiture, he could bring his prey—whether fœmen, or as here, at Altamire in Spain, a bison—within the power of his weapons.

a picture of the beast he wished to see at the point of his arrow and then went forth, confident that bison, deer, bear, or boar must cross his path. If he were not quite certain of his marksmanship he might add to his sketch a picture of his arrow, fatally directed. So wherever the Magdalenian dwelt, although he lived, painted, hunted, and fought perhaps fifteen thousand years ago, you will find today his magic paintings, often in colours almost as vivid as on the day when he dropped his brush and went forth to face invading Azeliens who were to drive him from his caverns and his country.

On the walls or ceilings of his caves at Altamira in Spain, or at Les Eyzies in France, you may see the goat, the chamois, the deer, elk, bear, or boar which he hunted and on which he fed, while in his painted rivers painted trout, pike, or eels await the casting of his bone hook or spear. On a rock at Peña Tu, on the hills not far from Altamira, a row of dancing men look out, as they dance, towards a neighbouring necropolis where dead Magdalenians sleep more quietly for the magic virtue of the dancers' flying feet.

The primitive use of art to serve the ends of magic comes nearer to our own day when we visit the tombs of ancient Egypt. On the walls of these sepulchral chambers forgotten artists carved in stone, or painted in frescoes, all the things that might make glad the heart of man, not for mere adornment but to satisfy the needs of the dead in that far country to which his soul had gone. The loaves of bread, the jars of wine, the flocks and herds, the servants engaged in their several tasks, the little boat like that whereon, with his singers and his lute players, he had sailed the river Nile when the moonlight was on the waters, all these with many other of his earthly possessions were faithfully reproduced in the confident belief that they would become real

in that other world to ensure the comfort of him who lay within his stone sarcophagus.

On the other hand, the "non-representational" art of Asia which delighted in geometric or floral patterns, in brilliant colours framed in equally brilliant borders, came from the handiwork of nomadic peoples who, because of their wandering lives, could create no architecture and therefore no architectural art. Dwellers in tents, they could only weave the wool of their flocks or the hairs of their camels into splendid tapestries or woven hangings wherein the gorgeous colours of the flowers that briefly carpeted their high plateaus were imprisoned for the long, dark winter months.

So beneath the stone tools of prehistoric man, or from his fibre brushes, one art was born which was passed on from generation to generation until it came to the city which Byzas founded, but whose glories he never saw. Over other roads, and borne by other hands, came an art of geometric or floral patterns enclosed in decorative borders that were first woven in wool by the women of Asiatic nomadic tribes.

In this complex interweaving of many threads which we call Byzantine art political conceptions also found expression, and here again we find the influence of Persia. In that outpost of old Asia the Achæmenian and Sassanian sovereigns—Darius, Xerxes, and Cyrus; Ardashir, Shapur, and Chosroes—appeared to their subjects as earthly expressions of the divine, wherefore the art that flourished beneath the throne sought to give expression to the inexpressible. Since nothing could be too lofty, too ambitious, or too rich for the representation of the divine majesty of kings the architects raised such mighty vaults as that which still lifts its head above the wastes that surround the halls of Chosroes'

palace at Ctesiphon; hence came domes that seem to have been hung in space by the jinn of Sinbad's tales, the splendours of Sassanian decorations, the profusion of precious materials, and the contrasts of brilliant colours.

Such regal and flattering conceptions were welcomed in Byzantium where the Emperor, if no longer deified by the action of the Senate, was accepted as the earthly representative of God, a bishop by divine appointment whose authority rivalled that of the first apostles. As in Persia, therefore, Byzantine art sought to give expression to the superhuman glory of the Emperor.

The palaces wherein these sovereigns dwelt and whereby, in structure and in decoration, their high authority was affirmed have long since perished; gone, too, with few exceptions are the churches whose mosaics, frescoes, liturgies, and ceremonials echoed the formal etiquettes of imperial courts. But in Salonica, Parenzo, Aquileia, Ravenna, Rome, Palermo, and Monreale enough has survived to enable us to call from the dust the spectres of Byzantium's pride and power.

Side by side with this Perseo-Byzantine conception of the sacro-regal character of monarchy, which left its impressions on the churches of the West as well as on those of the East, there flowed another stream of iconographic influences which issued from a humbler source.

Over against the Court, the metropolitan hierarchy, the university, and the aristocracy stood the great masses of the people—the workers in field or in factory, the labourers on the farms, in the city streets, or on the quays, the small shop-keepers, the peasants, villagers, and the monks—especially the monks. Usually born of the people, speaking their tongue, understanding and sharing their feelings and convictions, the monks were closer

to the masses of the population, better able to sway and lead them, than were the clergy of the capital who were separated by many lines of cleavage alike from the monks and from the masses.

It would have been well for the land if these two orders, the abbots and the bishops, could have worked together in spiritual collaboration, but the trumpets sounded and the cry went forth, "To your tents, O Israel," when Leo the Isaurian forbade, in 726 A.D., the placing of images in home and church alike.

Only the consequences of the struggle that ensued, the Iconoclastic Controversy, concern us here. Behind the bitter strife lay a long record of antagonism to all forms of religious art, and neither party to the dispute would accept the sane deliverance of Pope Gregory the Great, "It is one thing to worship an image and another to see in it what we ought to worship. A picture or a statue should reveal to one who cannot read the way in which he ought to walk." But the quiet judgments of the great Gregory found fewer friends and followers than did the fanatic thunders of John of Damascus, "Whoever destroys an image is the devil's friend," or of Theodore of the great Studion monastery at Constantinople—"He who refuses to prostrate himself before an image is the enemy of Christ." Other theologians, however sympathetic with these of Damascus or of the Studion, might be more guarded in their utterances, yet the people, unskilled in the splitting of scholastic hairs, accepted the images as being themselves divine and turned to them for miracles of help and healing.

No one foresaw the crisis when, in 719, Leo of Isauria came to the throne. A great emperor, founder of a famous dynasty, country-born between Cilicia and Phrygia where the heretical Monophysites were powerful, and nurtured in antagonism to

image worship, Leo first saved his country from an assault by the Moslems at the zenith of their power when Moslemah led an army of 180,000 with a fleet of nearly 3,000 vessels to a fruitless siege of Constantinople that lasted for eighteen months.

But the unity of the Empire, where all parties had rallied around the throne, was snapped like a thread when the Isaurian, concerned over the growing superstition of the people, deemed that gratitude to God for his great victory bound him, as Josiah had felt bound, to put down the idolatrous priests who had burned incense unto Baal, to destroy their groves, and to break in pieces their idols. So feeling, Leo issued his famous edict which commanded the removal of all images, whether of Christ or of the saints, not only from the churches but even from the homes.

Under imperial orders Leo's servants placed a ladder against the gates of the palace at Chalcedon and one of them, climbing the rungs, began to shatter a revered and miracle-working image of the Christ. With his first blow an infuriated mob of screaming women tore down the ladder and slew the offender with his own sacrilegious axe.

This petty riot ushered in nearly a hundred years of war wherein, for the only time in history, all human life revolved around the pivot of religious art. Should Christ crucified be frescoed on a wall? Should the likeness of a saint be hung above a woman's bed? To decide such questions a nation sprang to arms; men battled in the streets, and the victors of the moment tortured, executed, or banished their friends of yesterday. Emperors were dethroned or rescued from their prisons by some turn in the wheel of fortune and re-established on their uneasy thrones. Cities were wellnigh ruined, churches and monasteries destroyed. The entire land was split into two contending factions, one led and sustained by all the powers of the Crown and by the

army; the other marshalled and directed mainly by the monks, who fanned the fanaticism of the people, receiving more help than opposition from the cities of Syria and of Asia Minor.

Both parties needed, and appealed for, the popular support. The Iconoclasts, "breakers of images," endeavoured to wean the people from their too highly venerated images by making popular a secular art. They multiplied frescoes, mosaics, and miniatures of hunting scenes, of woods and meadows, of tame cattle and wild beasts. They gave to the world countless little scenes in genre—a young girl stepping from her bath, the division of the spoils when the day's hunt was over. Few examples of this architectural art have survived, but "it will suffice to recall the graceful decorations of the cupola of the mausoleum of S. Costanza at Rome (354 A.D.) and the celebrated mosaics of the rotunda of S. George at Salonica, an old pagan mausoleum changed into a 'martyrion' in the Fourth Century in honour of several saints, where portraits lie against a background of imaginary [*irrécles*] architecture, like those of the second style at Pompeii. At Salonica also Letourneau has discovered, in the ancient church of the Panagia which dates from the second half of the Fifth Century, a magnificent decoration of mosaics—vases delicately carved from which rise the curling tendrils of the vines, octagons enclosing birds of many colours, serpents in their sinuous curves, young leaves and water-flowers that intermingle around a crown of flowers." These may give us some idea of this Iconoclastic art.<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand the Iconodules, "worshippers of images," with even greater ardour poured forth their representations of the saints, portraying the entire range of religious history or legend in which the images had played their kindly part. If

<sup>3</sup> Louis Bréhier, *L'Art Byzantin*, pp. 40-41.



mosaics were usually beyond the financial resources of the monasteries the monks could teach powerfully by dramatized sermons that were the forerunners of the mediæval mystery drama, by illustrated works of prose or poetry, and by theatrical plays, all of which flowed forth in a steady stream. Perhaps the most effective appeal was made by the devotional books, especially the Psalms.

In all these ways the monks sought to rally the people to the defence of their images, and also—following Christ less closely than King David who boasted, “Do not I hate them who hate Thee, O God”—to look with horror upon their Iconoclastic rulers and clerics.

To all this work they brought a fiery energy, a verve, a wealth of imagination, and a sense of realism that made their appeals far more effective than were the mildly pleasing mosaics, frescoes, or miniatures of the Court-directed artists. Thus the feverish energies of Iconoclasts and of Iconodules not only flooded the land with their partisan and proselyting arts, but also created a tide so full that it overflowed into the West—into a West that had already been prepared to receive that which the East could offer.

Long before the dwellers in Provence had heard the tread of Roman legions or the hymns of Christian priests, the culture of Greece had come to Gaul. Marseilles had been a Greek Colony, founded perhaps by traders from Phocæa about the year 600 B.C. Nîmes still retains, in her coat of arms, the palm tree and the crocodile which testify to her Græco-Egyptian origin; the first Gallic martyrs came from the East—from Pergamum or from Phrygia; the account of the martyrs of Lyons and of Vienne is written in Greek; the services of the Church of S. Martin at Tours long continued in the Greek tongue, while in

the South the use of that language by the churches persisted into the Fifth Century and had not entirely disappeared in Limoges in the Tenth.

For the first three centuries "most, if not all, the churches of the West were . . . Greek religious colonies. Their language was Greek, their scriptures Greek, and many vestiges and tradition show that their ritual, their liturgy, were Greek. Through Greek every heresiarch, having found his way to Rome, propagated his peculiar doctrines. Greek was the commercial language throughout the Empire. . . . All the extant Christian writings which appeared in Rome and in the West are, or originally were, Greek."<sup>4</sup>

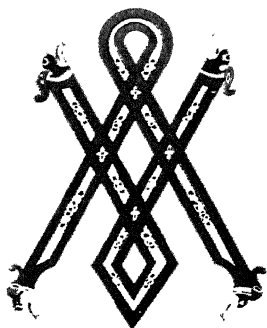
Colonies of Greeks, first of merchants and later of monks, gave a Hellenistic colour to the city of Rome which was at least half Grecian in its composition. Grecian feasts found their way into the Roman Church, while the relics of Eastern saints, brought to Rome, became the centres of new forms of devotion. Between 606 and 752 nine popes of Grecian birth, and five of Syrian, sat on the papal throne.

But Rome under the Exarchs of Ravenna was very different from the city of the Cæsars. No longer drawing tribute from the world she had ceased to rule, she had become dependent upon Byzantium from whom she received her governors and her laws—everything except her memories.

To the poverties thus begun must be added the disasters of the Fifth Century—the sack of the city by Alaric the Goth, later by Genseric the Vandal, and the fall of Ravenna to the Herulian Odoacer. Finally Justinian's suicidal victories over Totila, destroying the Gothic buffer state, opened the gates to the inundations of the Lombards, while successive plagues, floods, and famines

<sup>4</sup> Milman, *History of Latin Christianity*, Vol. I, pp. 54-56.

INCPTEPILA  
ADROMNS



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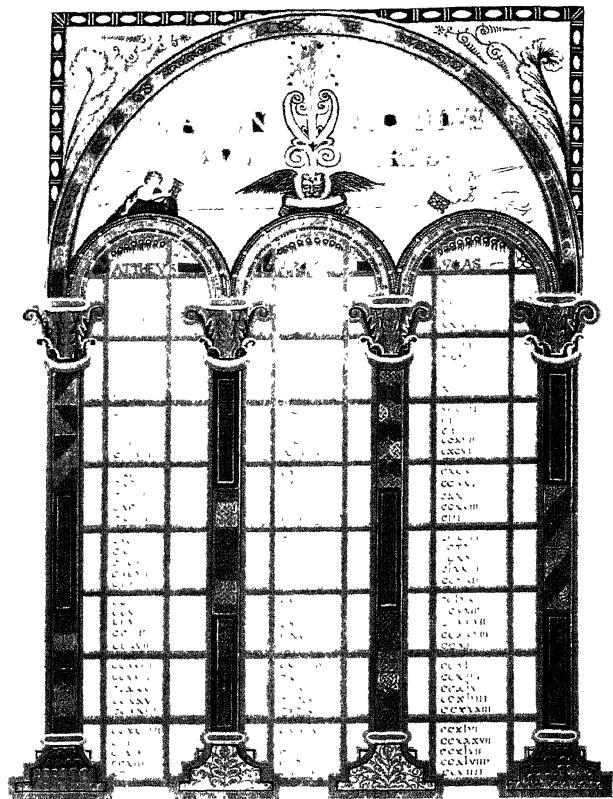


TVSAPTLS

CARLOVINGIAN TITLE PAGE

*Columbia Univ. Lib'y.*

The decorative wolf- and serpent-headed interlaces derive from ancient Scythia. This page is the beginning of Paul's Epistle to the Romans, copied for Charles the Bald in the Ninth Century. ("Incipit Epistola ad Romanos. Paulus, servus Jesu Christi, vocatus Apostolus . . .")



*Columbia Univ Lib'y*

# THE EUSEBIAN CANON SECUNDUS TITLE PAGE

Tables giving cross references between the gospels The architectural motif, grouped arches on columns, is Byzantine; the manuscript is Carolingian work.

darkened these tragedies and delivered Rome, abandoned by all that had made her great, to a drear existence of fear, of poverty, and of impotence.

Nor was Rome alone in her distress; the entire Western world had been engulfed by the barbaric deluge; the old civilization, derived from Rome, seemed to have perished forever; barbarians filled the seats of power, and those who had wealth desired neither poets nor artists to perpetuate their fame. The great river of Mediterranean culture dwindled to a thin, if silvery thread, and all those in whom the memory of the Latin's golden age remained looked with envy towards the East where Constantinople stood, like a new Ararat, rising above a world which had been submerged beneath the barbaric flood.

Such artistic reinforcements as the anarchy of the times permitted the West to receive, or the monasteries of the Occident to import, came from the ateliers of the cities that were under the Byzantine rule, or from Byzantium herself which, long before the Iconoclastic controversy, had been a goal of pilgrims. Western priests, monks, or penitents came to the city either for its own sake, since it was the repository of the True Cross, or because it was a stage on the road that led to the shrines of Palestine. Here came Reoval, a learned doctor of Poitiers in the Sixth Century, and Radegonde, a saint of the same time and place; and by such pilgrims relics, often in their reliquaries, tapestries, ivories, and patens wrought by Byzantine goldsmiths, with similar works of art, found their way into the West. Embassies and traders added to the stream, bringing to Merovingian or to Carolingian kings gifts from Eastern emperors, and to the monasteries and churches the treasures pilgrims brought as gifts, or traders offered for sale. To this day Romanesque and Gothic churches are rich in works of the weavers' looms, in

ivories, or in vessels of wrought gold or silver, all bearing witness to the intercourse—political, commercial, or religious—that bound the ends of the continent together. Yet all that survives is but a fragment of the wealth that once the churches of the West possessed.

This intercourse was strengthened, even though the ecclesiastical bands were broken, by the Iconoclastic controversy for many artists fled from bitter persecution in Constantinople to the protection of Western Europe—especially to Italy—where they opened their ateliers, taught pupils, and wrought for new patrons.

Throughout the long years wherein the barbarians—Franks, Teutons, Burgundians, and Goths in their several branches—were struggling out of their semi-savagery into an ordered, disciplined, and civilized life all this Eastern art was kept alive in the monasteries; emerging into the open in the Carolingian epoch and then retiring once more to the cloisters when the Dark Ages shadowed all Europe with their destructions and confusions. This, however, was the last retreat until the end of the Gothic Age. The renaissance of the Eleventh Century called forth first the painter, then the glazier and finally, but not until the end of the century, the sculptor.

Like his comrade artists the sculptor undertook no more than to reproduce in stone the models that came to him from the East, especially the miniatures of the manuscripts. In the main he found his motives already prepared for him by artists working in another field, and the images which he transcribed into his statues or bas-reliefs had been designed for the miniatures of manuscripts. Nevertheless, great as were these influences upon the sculptors of the West, there were no such carvings in the East; it is a curious fact that it was a statueless art which gave

birth to the multitudinous bas-reliefs and monumental statuary of the West.<sup>5</sup>

Therefore the models for the long, stiff apostles, saints, or prophets that line the portals of Notre-Dame at Chartres, or of S. Trophime at Arles, for the little figures in the frieze at S. Gilles, for the tympani of Notre-Dame in Paris, for bas-reliefs and capitals everywhere must be sought especially in the miniatures of the manuscripts, but also in the tapestries, silks, enamels, small mosaics, and in the ivories that formed the covers of books, the panels of the reliquaries, or the plaques of the diptychs with which the East enriched the West. The diptychs have an interesting origin. Originally they were writing tablets in two sections, hinged like the slates of Victorian children so that they might be closed when idle, or opened when in use. They were waxed on the inside to receive the impression of the stylus, while their outer faces were carved if of ivory, and painted if of wood. On his succession to office the Roman official, Consul or Emperor, presented such tablets to his friends and supporters, the exterior face being decorated with a portrait of the donor. From this writing tablet came the Carolingian or mediæval diptych which is so familiar a feature of the altar furniture.

But the influences of these pagan days went beyond the form; often on these Latin or Byzantine tablets, or on the sarcophagi,

<sup>5</sup> The antagonism of the East to all carvings in the round was not due, as has often been believed, to any compromise effected at the close of the Iconoclastic controversy, for the Eastern Church never formally condemned the sculptor's art. It sprang from the preferences of the builders who liked better the decorative effects obtained for the exteriors of their churches by the selection and arrangement of their materials—by the use of coloured marbles, by bands of varicoloured bricks, or by alternating courses of stone with those of brick. Their preferences likewise led them to beautify their interiors by plaques of tinted marbles, by richly coloured frescoes or mosaics, thus leaving little room for bas-reliefs or statues. In such preferences rather than in any decrees of Councils lies the explanation for the lack of statuary in oriental churches.

the honoured official, living or dead, is represented among his friends with the first two fingers of one hand extended, while the thumb and the other fingers are bent down; so an unknown Consul stands on a consular diptych at Halberstadt. Originally the artist employed the gesture to indicate that the person so represented was engaged in conversation, but the pagan artistic custom gave rise to the Latin form of benediction. With His hand so raised the infant Jesus blesses those who pass the window of "La Belle Verrière" at Chartres, as does S. Sernin at Toulouse, and Bishop Poore (or is it Bishop Bingham?) from his tomb at Salisbury. With the same gesture Christ in glory gives His benediction from the tympanum of Carannac, while the throne on which He sits is descended from the official chair on which the Consul sat, either in the discharge of his official duties or when, also officially, he presided over the Roman games, and on which he appears in many Roman or Byzantine diptychs.<sup>6</sup>

So for centuries, along all the roads whereby man may have contact with his fellow man in peace or in war—by armies or by embassies, by traders or by pilgrims—the manuscripts with their miniatures, the ivories, enamels, silks, tapestries with the chalices or patens wrought by goldsmiths, flowed Westward. We find their influences from Sicily, through Italy, on the Rhine as on the Rhône, through England to Ireland and where the long night rests on Scandinavian snows.

Throughout the West, within and behind the stones of Romanesque abbeys and Gothic cathedrals, the East is speaking. Here, even though the Latin and the Greek, like Jew and Samaritan of old, "have no dealings" with each other, yet their voices join in the ancient songs of faith, in the antiphons of triumph, and

<sup>6</sup> O. M. Dalton, *Byzantine Art and Archaeology*, pp. 180, 185, 194 ff., and 644.



in the soaring notes that celebrate the promise of an endless victory.

On the night of May 28, 1453, so the story runs, Mohammed the Conqueror, with his janissaries, entered Constantinople; with his bodyguard he rode through the shattered gate of S. Romanus, over the dead body of the last Byzantine Emperor, past the Burnt Column (where no angel with flaming sword fulfilled the hopes of a recreant people who preferred praying to fighting), up the steps of Sancta Sophia and through the portals. But at the head of the nave they checked their horses, for over the heads of the terrified multitude they saw the priests, in long procession, crossing the chancel bearing in their hands the holy, and jewelled, treasures of the church. The Conqueror watched and grimly smiled, for there was no doorway by which they might escape. Yet onward marched the priests, chanting as they went, until before the Moslem's startled eyes the stone walls opened; higher and wider grew the gap, and through that miraculous opening went the priests, rank behind rank, until the last had vanished. Then the walls closed down again and, muffled behind the stones, the sound of the singing slowly died away.

Thereafter through all the centuries Moslems at their prayers on the midnight before Easter heard, and still may hear, the old hymns of triumph, the songs of victory, that the priests are singing within the walls as they wait the deliverance of their city, and the exaltation of the Cross of Christ above the Crescent of "torch-bearing Hecate."

CHARLES DIEHL, *L'Art Chrétien d'Orient* in *Histoire Universelle de l'Art*.

LOUIS BRÉHIER, *L'Art Byzantin; L'Art Chrétien*, Chaps. V and VI; *L'Art des Barbares* in *Histoire Universelle de l'Art*.

O. M. DALTON, *Byzantine Art and Archaeology*.

JOSEPH STRZYGOWSKI, *Origins of Christian Church Art*.

## Chapter Four

### THE LONG NIGHT

IN the Fifth Century successive waves of barbarian tribes swept over the old imperial frontiers, blotting out the Latin civilization and calling into being an epoch which "marked the low ebb of European culture, a chaos of all systems, a universal confusion in which the struggle itself was neither systematic nor permanent."<sup>1</sup>

The entire structure of society was shaken by the death agonies of the old world and by the birth pangs of the new. The Roman peace was shattered by the storms of tribal warfare and by the fratricidal strife of kings; the code of written law and statute gave place to the unwritten law of tribal customs. In the confusion of the centuries the Roman trade routes were abandoned and lost in jungles of disorder; journeys became perilous, pirates infested the seas, and barbarian bands roved the land taking delight in destructions and massacres. Forests once more covered the sown fields; within the crumbling walls of ghostly towns, and in their deserted streets, only a few miserales vegetated. Civilization died and anarchy ruled. The general débâcle involved all the arts of earlier times including the architect's skill, the engineer's science, and the mason's craft. Nevertheless, although the air was filled with the sounds of clashing swords and of crackling flames, the building of churches went forward, perhaps the faster for the fact that so many sons of Cain, sitting on

<sup>1</sup> Guizot.

uneasy thrones, sought to purchase pardon for crimes and peace with God by their benefactions to the Church.<sup>2</sup>

A brief, but false, dawn came with the reign of Charles the Great; fallen, or falling, churches were everywhere restored; new abbeys and churches came into being, and the whole Carolingian empire felt the controlling power of the imperial hand. But hardly had the bells stopped tolling for the great Charles than new barbaric waves began to overflow all lands. Vikings from the North fell on England, Germany, and France. "‘They came,’ says an eye-witness, Simeon of Durham, ‘like stinging wasps; they roamed the country like savage wolves, robbing, biting, and killing not merely cattle but priests, monks and nuns.’ Before the end of the century other barbarians, the Magyars, appeared from the East. Mounted on light, swift, and strong horses, trained from infancy to the saddle, so skilled with bow and javelin that they could discharge their shafts with unerring accuracy even when riding at full speed, they filled the lands with the terror of their name.”<sup>3</sup>

Even earlier, when mayors of the palace were ruling in the name of the last feeble Merovingians, Moslems from Africa had crossed the seas. They overran all Sicily, all Southern Italy, and from their strongholds on the heights watched the roads, seizing, robbing, and holding for ransom those who dared the perilous journey. They fell upon Provence, penetrating even to the heart of France where Saracens crossed their scimitars with Norman swords. In Spain wave after wave of Cordovan armies swept to and over the escarpments of the Pyrenees, sacking Narbonne, Toulouse, Bordeaux and reaching even to Autun. Only the hard-won victory of Charles the Hammer saved the land

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Sartell Prentice, *The Heritage of the Cathedral*, Chap. VIII, *passim*.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Chap. XII, *passim*.

from the grip of Cordova. Throughout the darkness of this long night all horizons, from Toledo to Durham, glowed with the flames of burning churches; from one doomed sanctuary to another fled bishops, priests, and monks, seeking even a temporary refuge for the holy relics that God had committed to their charge. Yet so thorough was the destruction that hardly any of the churches whose praises are sung by the chroniclers of the times escaped the torches of the barbarians.

In France the Abbey of S. Pierre at Vienne still retains the exterior walls and the interior columns that flank its windows, but these are all that remain of the Merovingian church that was erected about the year 490. Part of the Basse Œuvre, at Beauvais, probably belongs to the Eighth Century; the core of the Baptistery of S. John at Poitiers may date from the Fourth, and those of Aix-en-Provence and of Fréjus were probably built in the Seventh. Other fragments survive here or there. Some scattered crypts remain—those of Jouarre, and of S. Laurent at Grenoble, for instance—whose masonry betrays early Merovingian work, but there is little today of all the many churches that Gregory of Tours tells us came into being from the penitence, the ambitions, or the rivalries of kings, lords, or bishops.

Hardly more remains to us from Carolingian days; in fact, Charlemagne spent his energy more in rebuilding the churches of Merovingian times than in building new abbeys and churches. He ordered the bishops throughout his domains to restore the churches that had fallen into ruins, and instructed his travelling representatives, the *Missi Dominici*, to see to it that his orders were carried out. However, important constructive work was done during the Eighth Century; for instance, at the Abbeys of S. Riquier in Picardy, S. Gall in Switzerland, Fulda and Lorsch in Germany, and at Corbie and Fontenelle in France. The only

important survivals of Charlemagnac work that have come to us are the Palace Chapel at Aachen, whose core remains as the great Charles built it in the year 790 and, until the restorer began his deadly work in 1867, the church at Germigny-des-Prés, which ranks with the chapel at Aachen in antiquity.

Spain is more fortunate in its survivals for here there remain, in whole or in large part, some forty churches that were erected in these centuries. Of these, three at least, with fragments of others, belong to the times when Visigothic kings were ruling from Toledo.\*

Interesting as these churches are from the architectural point of view, since they help to span the gap between the wooden-roofed basilica of Roman days and the stone-vaulted edifice of the Eleventh Century, they have less to tell us of the development of iconography throughout the long night with which we are now concerned. This is due to the fact that the contacts of Spain were closer with Syria and the Byzantine East than they were with the lands across the Pyrennes. The sea was open, and along that road the arts of Asia Minor, of Syria, Byzantium, and even of distant Persia continuously flowed towards Spain.

At S. Miguel de Lino, near Oviedo, the door jambs are carved with scenes from the Roman Circus taken from a consular diptych; a griffon on one of the panels of the iconostasis screen, the barrier that separated the chancel from the aisles, might have been wrought in Mesopotamia, or even in tapestries of Persia. The Annunciation that is carved on the base of a pier came evidently from a Byzantine ivory.

\* Here is perhaps as good a place as any to note that the possibility of ever again seeing the Spanish antiquities referred to in the text is of course contingent upon what the future may have to show. However, pending more certain information than is available at this writing, it has seemed better to hope for the best and use, as above, the present tense.

At S. Christina de Lena a horseman and a wolf are framed in a double twist, and these may be akin to the Northern barbarian art and have entered Spain with the Visigoths; but Daniel in the lions' den, the sacrifice of Isaac, the figures of the four Apostles, and the birds bring us back again to the stream of oriental influences that sailed the seas. At S. Salvador de Fuentes, between Oviedo and Santander, we meet again with Gilgamesh, strangler of lions, whom we have repeatedly met in France and also in Sweden, but this church belongs, in point of time at least, to the Romanesque century, since it was built in 1023. Thus in all the five centuries that make up the long night there is little in the iconography of Spain that may not be explained by the contacts of the peninsula with the East.

More moving even than the pitiful fragments that remain to us, from the north of England through France and into Spain, are the foundations of these lost churches that the spade of the excavator has laid bare, sometimes still blackened by the flames that the "fury of the Northmen" kindled, for here the imagination takes control.

Often these supporting stones lay only beneath the chancel with its apses, wherefore we may infer that the walls, except around the apse, were of wood and needed no deep foundations. The inference is justified by the chroniclers who tell us that most of these churches were built and roofed with wood, were unpaved—except around the chancel—while the windows were glazed by linen sheets. Sometimes, however, we get glimpses of greater churches; that of S. Martin at Tours, for instance, was one hundred and sixty feet long, sixty feet wide and forty-five feet high; fifty-three windows gave light to the interior whose aisles were entered from eight portals and lined with one hundred and sixty marble columns. But whether they were rich

and powerful through the favour of kings, or whether they had no beauty that men should desire them, the long-buried stones of these dead churches faintly echo the words of old liturgies that still survive in the services of our day; prayers wherein the hopes of men were carried, and are still carried, up to the throne of God, and hymns that have lived through all the passing years, though Merovingian lips are silent, and Carolingians' are mingled with the dust.

The petition of our Litany for deliverance from sudden death was once conjoined with the heartfelt prayer, "From the fury of the Northmen, Good Lord, deliver us," and rose all along the Eastern coasts of England while watchmen scanned the seas for the sails of Viking ships.

The "Te Deum Laudamus" was being sung in the West when S. Augustine was building his basilicas in Canterbury.

The prayer of S. Chrysostom, "Almighty God, Who hast given us grace at this time with one accord to make our common supplications unto Thee," was doubtless murmured by congregations kneeling in the aisles of S. Martin of Tours.

The hymn that is still sung as a Processional on Palm Sunday,

"All glory, laud and honor  
To Thee, Redeemer, King"

("Gloria, laus, et honor tibi sit,  
Rex Christe Redemptor"),

was written by Theodolf, Bishop of Orléans, when in prison, suspected of treason against Charlemagne.

The collect from the Mozarabic liturgy,

"O God, the Author of peace, shed abroad Thy peace in our hearts and minds; guard and protect us in all dangers and make us, ever trusting in Thy defence, to serve Thee without fear all the days of our life,"

still lives in our forms of worship. Indeed, until Spain entered upon her present unhappy phase, that ancient liturgy, with which the vaults of S. Juan de Baños, of Comba de Bande, and the churches of Tarassa—also of Visigothic date—were familiar, was chanted daily in a chapel of Toledo Cathedral.

Although we can summon these old churches from the dust, partly from the records of their contemporary chroniclers, partly from the lines of their foundations, and partly by the aid of our imaginations, and although we know something of their architecture, their liturgies, prayers, hymns, and disciplines, we can speak with less assurance of their iconography.

We know that frescoes brightened the walls and apses of Carlovingian, but not of Merovingian, churches. On the other hand we know that the mosaics which adorned the churches that Clovis and his successors built were lacking in those that were erected by Carlovingian kings. We further know that, until the churches of France vanished amid Viking flames, the walls, arcades, shrines and altars were hung with oriental tapestries, many of great price; and finally we know that in neither Merovingian nor in Carlovingian churches was there any sculpture "in the round," that no such statues lined their portals as those we find at Chartres. Nor need we be surprised at the lack of sculpture. The fact that the masons, when they had exhausted the columns which the Romans had left behind, were forced to substitute rectangular piers for round pillars because they were not able to cut curving stones, the further fact that, because of their lack of skill in stereotomy, they had to build their walls of rubble instead of dressed stone, clearly imply an inability to call statues from the rough.

Decorative carvings, however, did exist. The carved panels of the iconostasis screens that still remain in place at S. Christina



de Lena and at S. Miguel de Escalada, the round disks that are suspended between the spandrels of the nave arcade at S. Maria de Naranco, suggest that similar carvings may well have marked the contemporary art across the Pyrenees. Nor is this merely an assumption, for at S. Guilhem-le-Désert, at Flavigny, La Charité-sur-Loire, at Aix and at Arles, there are crosses, ciboria, piers, or chancel screens of Carolingian workmanship that bear geometric designs; interlocking circles, spirals, vines or foliage whose curving tendrils sometimes encircle birds or fruits. Similar forms also appear on the sarcophagi in the crypt of Jouarre. There are altars that speak to us of Merovingian days through their representations of doves, lambs, and vines. The peoples of prehistoric times, who dwelt in France throughout the thousand years before the coming of Christ—the Hallstatt and La Tène periods—also left an inheritance which survived throughout the Gallo-Roman centuries to enrich both Merovingian and Carolingian churches. From the Hallstatt Age (900-500 B.C.) came groups of strokes that gave rise to the zigzag pattern; in the succeeding bronze age curved lines were added, combining with the straight lines to form bands and rows of circles, or to frame central stars or spiral whorls within arched border strips. In the Fourth Century before Christ there seems to have been an invasion, or a seepage, of Scythian art which was merged with the native Celtic forms; the first adopting the Celtic strip patterns, while the second accepted the Scythian animal forms, thus turning the arched border strips into rows of animal heads, and enclosing the forms of beasts in the spiral whorls.<sup>5</sup>

In Carolingian, but not in Merovingian, times the apses and walls of churches were often covered with frescoes, although

<sup>5</sup> R. Hinks, *Carolingian Art*, p. 78 seq.

almost none of these have survived. We know of their existence through the pens of the chroniclers—of Einhard, who was Commissioner of Works and Director of the Imperial Workshops under both Charlemagne and Louis the Pious, from capitularies for the years 807, 809, and 813, and from the records left by the monks of S. Gall.

From such sources we know that the left wall of the nave at Ingelheim, near Mainz, was frescoed with scenes from the Old Testament, while the opposite wall had scenes from the New. The same scheme appeared on the walls of the Abbey of S. Gall, and we know of similar work in other churches—in the refectory of Fontenelle, for instance, and in the apse of Fulda where the artist, Bruun (Candidus), left his signature.

On the other hand, if frescoes were common in Carolingian days and unknown in those of the Merovingians, mosaics were often used in earlier times and rarely in the later. Both the exterior and the interior of the church that Clovis built in 508 to honour SS. Peter and Paul, now the Parisian Church of S. Geneviève, were decorated with mosaics. Until the Eighteenth Century Notre-Dame de la Daurade, in Toulouse, possessed the Fifth Century mosaics that adorned the apse, and the church at Germigny-des-Prés still retains a mosaic of the Ark of the Covenant supported by two angels where Bishop Theodulf placed it in the Ninth Century.

Stained glass may have lit the interiors of some Carolingian churches, since Benigne de Dijon speaks of coloured glass that had been brought to his chapel from an older church which existed in the days of Louis, son of Charlemagne. In the early Eighth Century Benoît Biscop brought workers in glass from France to England, although the word does not necessarily

imply glaziers; certainly coloured glass windows were being made in Voraburg in the late Tenth Century.

Nevertheless, the fact that, until that century, the only known way of framing pieces of glass was by setting them in bars of wood, that lines of lead—which could be bent so as to form narrow channels wherein the glass might be set in beds of mortar—were not invented until the Tenth Century, makes it improbable that stained glass windows could have been used extensively, if at all, before the year 900. We also know, but only from the chroniclers, that the Abbey of S. Riquier had four large panels, wrought in stucco, whereon the stories of the Nativity, Crucifixion, Resurrection and Ascension were told—a form of decoration that was used in the churches of France, Germany, Switzerland, and Italy.

Ireland also, then an important cultural centre, lent her influence to the art of the continent through the energies and activities of Irish missionary monks, notably S. Columban. Their miniatures show a fondness for the fantastic, reducing the human figure to geometric lines, and so covering the body of Christ Crucified with interwoven bands of ribbons that His form is wellnigh hidden beneath the enveloping folds. Elsewhere animals twist and play; page after page is enriched with rose-forms, or with little scenes in genre—a cat playing with a mouse, for instance—which are enclosed in flowing lines.

In all this art—Merovingian, Carolingian, and Iberian—the human figure plays but little part. Wherever the sculptor, attempting the telling of a tale, undertakes to carve a saint or a hero of the Testaments his bas-reliefs are crude and clumsy, suggesting the play of children.

The brief renaissance in the varied forms of ecclesiastical art

that came with the accession of Charlemagne died in confusion when new barbarian invasions swept over the lands from the North, the South, and the East. The strong hand of Imperial Aachen lost its grip; those who followed Charles on the throne could no longer give protection or security to the Empire. Traders and travellers shrank from the perils of the roads; the Missi Dominici, who had carried the authority of the Crown to the remotest parts of the Charlemagnac kingdom, faded out of memory. Each province of the Empire, thrown back upon itself for maintenance and defence, withdrew into an unaccustomed isolation and lived its own life in forgetfulness of the old imperial unity. Thus grew up those regional schools which, although they may sometimes have been too rigidly defined, none the less left their marks upon the architecture and the art of France—consequences that have not entirely vanished even in our day. In the field of architecture Lombardic influences permeated Burgundy, but not the Garonne; north of the Loire the strength of Carolingian traditions barred the way to forces that were influential further south; in Auvergne and in Provence, where the Latin inheritance had been strong, Romanesque architecture found its highest and most forceful expression, and so throughout all France, as the people drew apart in the isolation that followed the disintegration of the Charlemagnac empire, the architecture began to follow different paths.

So also in the arts; regional differences left their mark on the iconography, partly because of subtle variations between centre, north, and south, partly because of the emphasis laid upon the regional saints, but even more because of differences in the material with which the artists had to work.

The hard granite and the volcanic rock of Central France did not so easily submit to the sculptor's chisel, whereas the softer

stone of the valley of the Loire, with that of its tributaries, made possible carvings that the harder granite and basalt forbade. We are here concerned, however, less with the ways in which these schools differed than in the forces which brought them to birth—the new barbarian invasions which, destroying the unity of the Carolingian Empire, isolated its component parts to a degree that had not been known since the days of Vercingetorix.

Very little of the monumental art of Merovingian or of Carolingian days has come down to us; whatever we may know, or infer, we gather from mere fragments of vanished churches—a wall here, a crypt there; a panel of an iconostasis screen, a capital, the carving on a door jamb, the base of a pillar, sometimes a sarcophagus. The chroniclers tell us much of which we would otherwise be ignorant; so do the miniatures of the manuscripts. The goldsmiths speak to us, as do the workers in ivory, in *champlevé*, in *cloisonné*, and in glass. But the churches rarely even whisper; for the most part their voices have been silenced by the flames which lit the darkness of the long night, by the sound of falling timbers and the crash of collapsing walls.

In the Tenth Century, however, and still faster in the Eleventh, the darkness gave way to dawn. Otto the Great of Germany, by his victory over the Huns in 955, ended the Magyar menace. The Christian victory at Navas de Tolosa in 1012 turned back the Moorish tide in Spain, although another seventy years had to pass before Alphonso VI could drive the Moslems beyond the Tagus and recapture the old Visigothic city of Toledo. Normans of France set Salerno free from the Saracenic grip and helped to expel the Unbelievers from all Southern Italy and Sicily; after more than a century of Moslem rule the Africans were driven from the coasts and cities of Provence.

In Northern France fortified bridges were thrown across all

streams by which the Vikings could sail for the harrying of the land, and castles—from which resistance to invading bands might be quickly organized—were erected on the heights that overlooked both roads and rivers. So the “fury of the Northmen,” of the Magyar and the Moor slowly died away, the long night ended, and the Romanesque day began to dawn.

JAMES W. THOMPSON, *Social and Economic History of the Middle Ages*.

SARTELL PRENTICE, *The Heritage of the Cathedral*, Chaps. VII, VIII, and IX.

R. HINKS, *Carolingian Art*.

LOUIS BRÉHIER, *L'Art Chrétien*, Chap. VII.

*Pre-Romanesque Churches of Spain*.

## Part Two

### THE ROMANESQUE PERIOD





## Chapter Five

### THE BACKGROUND OF ROMANESQUE ART

PIERRE, who nearly nine hundred years ago kept his small flock of sheep on the plains of Picardy, was getting old; spring-time, for him, had long since passed and the winter of his years was upon him, a winter of much discontent for the rains of many springs with the fogs and frosts of wellnigh fifty autumns had crippled his back and sent sharp pains into his legs. He had burned many candles and much incense on the altars of S. Riquier; he had offered first a lamb and then a sheep to the monks of the abbey for the intercessions of the saints, but the devil himself was in the fogs and the frosts, and even the abbot, who was older than Pierre and suffered in the same way, had found no formula whereby to exorcise him.

True, there were saints with ample power to help and to heal, for pilgrims and traders passing through had many tales to tell of miracles wrought at the tomb of S. Nicholas at a place they called Bari, but wherever Bari might be, it was evidently many days removed from Picardy, and still further from the reach of his purse—even if he had a purse, which he did not. Only kings, lords, and abbots carried purses for there was very little money in circulation in Pierre's day. Men bought by barter, exchanging a horse for a bag of corn, a piece of cloth for a measure of salt, or a pound of pepper for a pair of boots. Even in the castle barter was quite common; the lord of the manor could purchase three slaves for domestic work at the price of a horse, but it cost

a whole stable to provide his armour. He had to pay six oxen or twelve cows for a breastplate, six cows for a helmet, seven for a sword, three for a sword-belt, and a bit was worth a horse. But Pierre could hardly drive six oxen or twelve cows from Picardy down the Rhône Valley, across the Maritime Alps, over the plains of Lombardy and the Apennine Mountains to the heel of Italy; it would cost many cows and more sheep to pay the expenses of the journey and leave a worthy offering for S. Nicholas. Although there might be certain healing at the tomb of the saint of Bari, yet it was not for Pierre of Picardy. He must find some saint who had both the will and the power to heal, but whose shrine was within reach of the shepherd and his lamb.

It seems probable that Pierre and his rheumatism lived together all the days of his life, that only one of God's many angels—the one whom we meet at the end of day,—could bring relief to his back and legs. To his son, however,—certainly to his grandson,—happier days were given, for about the middle of the Tenth Century silver was discovered in the Hartz Mountains of Germany. Soon thereafter mints for the coining of currency sprang up throughout all the West, silver coins were multiplied and when purchase by barter thus gave way to purchase by cash Pierre's son, or grandson, could sell his lambs in a nearby market, put the price paid in his purse and set out for the distant shrines of Lucca, Rome, Bari, or of Santiago da Compostela in Western Spain. As the Eleventh Century drew near pilgrims began to crowd the roads—peasants and kings, artisans and princes, men of high or of low degree, each bearing his gifts with his sins or his sickness to the saving grace of some famed saint.

Inevitably church architecture felt the stimulus, for the gifts these pilgrims brought enabled the monks to enlarge their abbeys, to tear down and build anew, or to send forth colonies of

monks to erect new abbeys and monastic buildings where the waste lands were not yet subdued. Before the century was far advanced churches had sprung from the ground in such numbers that, to a Burgundian monk, God seemed to have "snowed churches" upon the land.

These pilgrim gifts had their influence upon the art of the abbey as well as upon its architecture, for often the wealthier votaries brought to the saint whose favours they sought a tapestry, an ivory, or an illuminated manuscript, all usually of Eastern origin or inspiration, while the lesser offerings of humbler pilgrims, added together, enabled the monks to buy still other treasures from the traders who came often to the abbey's gates. From such purchases or gifts the artists of the abbey took their models, covering the vaults, as at S. Savin, or the walls, as at Montoire, with huge frescoes which reproduced the details of the little miniatures until their churches were as illuminated as were their manuscripts. When the Twelfth Century dawned, but not till then, the sculptor took his place beside the painter and began to carve the porches, portals, and capitals of church or abbey in such forms as his materials would permit. In Provence he cut the figures on his stone with an auger, as earlier artists had often done in pagan days; in Auvergne he carved on hard granite with slow and difficult labour; elsewhere, as in Poitou, Saintonge and along the River Loire the soft sandstone permitted a freer and a more fanciful treatment.

But in all this Romanesque art you miss any reflection, any consciousness, of the living world; the monks knew the terrors of the great Last Day far better than they knew the beauties of the present. They walked but blindly through the woods of early spring, never seeing the young plants bursting through the wet earth, the upward-thrusting tendrils of the infant vines, the little

ferns still curled back upon their stems, or the buds of the forest trees breaking through their velvety sheaths. All these things the Gothic artist was to see and carve around his portals, but the monk, engrossed in the thoughts of another world, was content to copy the models Eastern artists had supplied, usually through the miniatures of their manuscripts.

Sometimes, however, the monk found his inspirations in the West, for the saints who were potent in the various districts also guided the sculptor's chisel. In the Bouches-du-Rhône Lazarus and the three Marys, who had landed here from Syria, received first place in the artist's thought; in the West the figure of S. Martin of Tours dominates the field, while along the great highway which led from France to Spain, where many a foot had been fought over by Charlemagne and his knights, the story of heroic crusading deeds is told or retold in frescoes or on stone. Thus the local histories and the regional saints mingled with the Byzantine traditions to provide the Romanesque artists with their themes. Elsewhere, in Burgundy, Auvergne, Provence, Languedoc, and in the Saxon monasteries of the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries—in districts where the Roman rule had been long established—evidences of pagan influences are not uncommon. Germanicus and Agrippina, carved on an intaglio, easily become representations of S. Joseph and the Virgin; the eagle of Jupiter, bearing Germanicus to the skies, could be made without difficulty into S. John and his accustomed symbol.

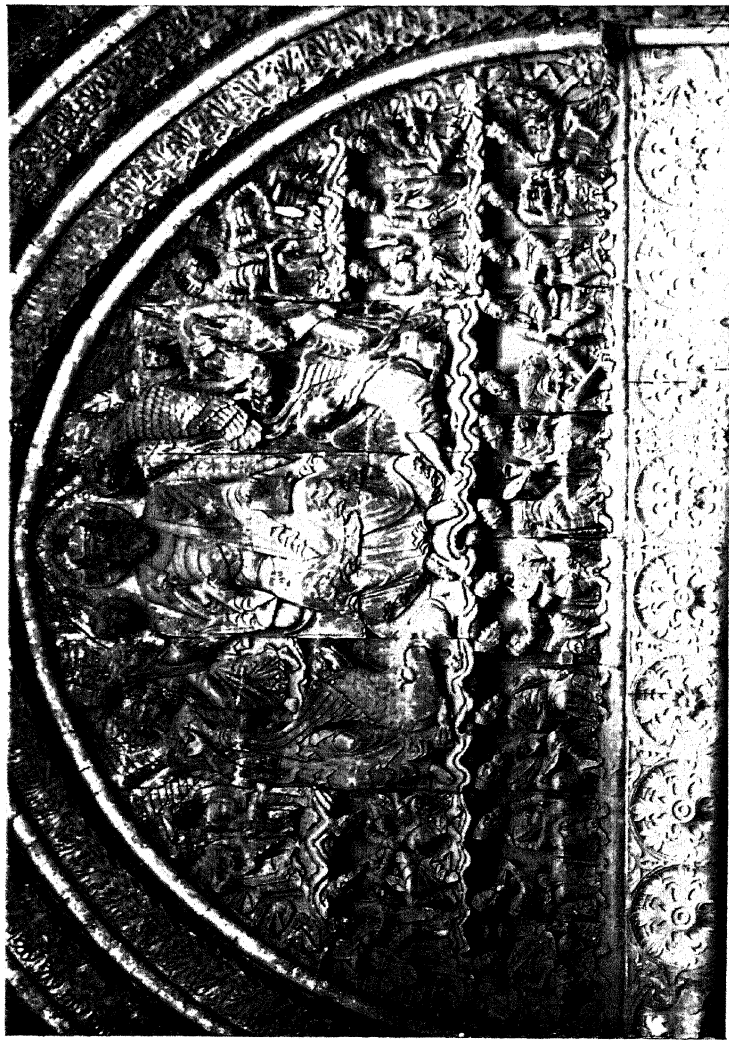
At Hildesheim a bronze column, executed under the orders of Bishop Bernward who died in 1023, tells the story of Christ in bas-reliefs that climb in spirals around the column that is evidently influenced by the memory of Trajan's stone monument in Rome. The stone apostles on the porch of S. Trophîme, in Arles, assume the attitudes of such Roman orators as those whose



*Princeton Univ. Lib'y.*

#### THE HERITAGE OF THE ROMANESQUE

In districts where the Roman rule had been long established, Christian art sometimes preserved the details of pose and costume of pagan art: LEFT: Sophocles, Vatican Museum, Rome. RIGHT: Figure from an early Christian sarcophagus, Clermont-Ferrand (Auvergne).



*Archives Photographique - Paris*

#### TYMPANUM OF THE GREAT PORTAL AT MOISSAC

A miniature in S. Beatus's Commentary on the Apocalypse (Spanish, Eighth Century) is the original of this sculpture in Twelfth Century France. Christ in glory; the four evangelists praise Him; the elders with their cups and viols.

statues may be seen in the museum across the way, while the figure of a youth, carved on the stylobate of the porch, who appears to be swimming with a very modern stroke, is copied from a sarcophagus in the Museum whereon is told the story of Meleager and the hunt for the Calydonian Boar, sent by Artemis to punish the king and the country of Calydon. As you pass from abbey to abbey throughout the centre and south of France you slowly realize that the art of these churches, after sleeping within the manuscripts for centuries, has suddenly awakened and come to life.

Here are themes that were born in the catacombs when men, daily walking side by side with death, strengthened their hearts with the assurance of a triumphant resurrection—Jonah delivered from the whale, Daniel from the lions' den, the three young Hebrews from the flames of Nebuchadrezzar's furnace. Here, too, are the creedal declarations of the great Councils that marked the Church's centuries of triumph before the barbarians came; while, beneath all these, forming a framework and a background, lies the purely decorative art of Asia that the Goths had learned from the Sarmatians on the steppes of Russia and which the Germanic tribes, taught by the Goths, had carried across the Rhine.

All this Romanesque art, like its architecture, is born of the cloister. If the monks, in their effort to escape the world, reared their abbeys in desolate places, like S. Guilhem-le-Désert, their art is no less removed from the world they had abandoned. Nowhere will you find—on their porches, their walls, capitals, cloisters or windows—the peasant engaged in the varied labours of the year, as at Amiens, the cobbler at his bench, the furrier or the tailor in his shop, as at Chartres. Instead you will find the miraculous deeds of long-dead saints; the endless conflicts of the

soul with the powers of Evil; the dread of Woman the Temptress, agent and ambassador of Hell, and the summons to a holy life as these themes are transmitted to them through the ivories or the tapestries of Byzantium, or through the miniatures of both Eastern and Western origin.

JAMES W. THOMPSON, *Social and Economic History of the Middle Ages*.

SARTELL PRENTICE, *The Heritage of the Cathedral*, Chap. XIII.

LOUIS BRÉHIER, *L'Art Chrétien*, Chap. VII.

ÉMILE MÂLE, Vol. I, Chap. VI.

LOUIS HOURTICQ, *Art in France*, Chap. VII.



## Chapter Six

### ROMANESQUE ART: THE MONK AS ACTOR AND ARTIST

ONE of the earliest of existing French sculptures is the representation of Christ in glory, carved in the early Twelfth Century on the tympanum of Moissac where the artist reproduced, as precisely as the stone and the space at his disposal would permit, a miniature from the commentary on S. John's Apocalypse that was written about the year 784 by S. Beatus, abbot of the monastery at Liebana in Northern Spain.

In the centre the monk who carved the scene placed Christ, seated upon the throne of His glory and encircled by the aureole; to right and to left, above and below, he carved the symbols of the four evangelists—symbols of Western, not of Eastern, origin—the Man, the Lion, the Bull, and the Eagle; while the twenty-four Elders of the Book of Revelation—the twelve prophets and the twelve apostles—with cups and viols in their hands, their eyes all upturned to the splendour of the Throne, occupy the long lintel that separates the tympanum above from the portal below.

The figure of the Man symbolizes S. Matthew who began his gospel with the human genealogy of Jesus; the Lion represents S. Mark, whose gospel opens with "The voice of one crying in the Wilderness"; the Bull stands for S. Luke who commenced his narrative with the sacrifice of Zecharia, while the Eagle, who alone among all birds could mount on high and look with steady gaze upon the full glory of the sun, reminds us that S. John, be-

ing in the Spirit on the Lord's Day at Patmos, had been permitted to pierce the clouds and see One whose "head was white as wool; His eyes were as a flame of fire; His feet like brass burned in a furnace, and His voice like the roar of many waters."

These same winged figures, however, were given even deeper meanings; they stood for the four great Mysteries in the life of Christ, and for the four supreme Virtues of the Christian life. As tokens of the Mysteries, the figure of the Man brought to mind the Incarnation; the Bull symbolized Christ's sacrificial Passion; the Lion, whose breath gave life on the third day to cubs born dead, stood for the Resurrection of Jesus, and the Eagle for His Ascension. As symbols of the Christian Virtues, the Man stands for the powers of Reason; the Bull for the renunciations demanded of the Christian; the Lion for his courage—was it not written "The Just shall be strong and without fear, even as the Lion"?—while the Eagle summoned man to face death with the glorious expectancy of immortality.<sup>1</sup>

Although this commentary of S. Beatus, which so stirred the admiration of his own and of later centuries that it was copied and circulated on both sides of the Pyrenees, was written among the Cantabrian Mountains of Northern Spain, yet it bears clear evidences of contacts with Byzantine sources. The sainted author borrowed freely from early Eastern commentators on the Apocalypse, and it is altogether probable that he owed some debt, large or small, to the miniaturists of the Orient.

<sup>1</sup> By the Fifteenth Century the spiritual significance of these symbols have been quite forgotten; the artists no longer remember their connexion with the birth, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, or their appeal to the heroic in the spirit of man. From the end of the Fourteenth Century onward the Lion, the Bull and the Eagle appear like household pets. Sometimes the Bull and the Lion kneel at the feet of the Evangelists, offering their backs as desks to S. Matthew or to S. Luke for the writing of their gospels, while the Eagle carries an inkwell suspended from his neck and hands a pen to S. John with his outstretched claw. Émile Mâle, Vol. III, p. 228; also Vol. I, Chap. I.

Entering France at Moissac, the influence of the saint of Liebana spread throughout the south and the centre of the country, and this influence is shown in the lesser as well as in the greater details. For instance, two old men are shown on a capital of S. Hilary in Poitiers; each has seized his opponent by the beard with one hand while the other hand brandishes a razor; each venerable misbehaviourist is being restrained by a woman who grasps his upraised arm and seeks to draw him from the fray. Turn now to the Commentary of S. Beatus and you will find the scene repeated. Two old men, both quite bald, have grasped each other by the beard with one hand and by the neck with the other while a woman, evidently amused, looks on in the background. Beneath the scene is written "*Frontibus attritis, barbas conscindere fas est,*" which may be freely translated: "When arguing with a bald man, who has no hair to grasp, it is permitted to pull his beard." True, the razor of Poitiers is lacking in the miniature of Liebana, but the danger is no less for the beards are being torn out in tufts from the roots.

And there are many similar touches in the carvings of the Midi which not only reveal the wide-spread influence of Beatus and of his work but also give us the key to much of the iconography of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries, for the most important sources from which the monks drew their inspirations were the miniatures which illuminated the manuscripts that were passed from monastery to monastery.

Often, as at Moissac, it is possible to identify the particular source from which the artist drew his theme, and we can usually read the meanings of his chisel. However, the writing is not always clear, nor is a Daniel to interpret always to be found. Sometimes, indeed, there is no hidden meaning; the artist merely intended to amuse and not to instruct. At other times he drew his

motives from tales and legends that have passed away and been forgotten; we have the scene but not the text, and there is no way in which we may discover the purpose of the artist. At Saintes two cavaliers dash against each other across a capital of a portal while women, much distressed, endeavour to hold them back. The artist was probably inspired by some ballad, some song, sung by travelling minstrels for the entertainment of pilgrims to Compostela who had halted at the Abbaye-aux-Dames of Saintes, but what that ballad was we do not know.

At Angoulême knights appear to attack a castle. To deliver a princess? To free a captive? To avenge a wrong? No whisper comes from the romances of the day to enlighten us. In a fresco of Notre-Dame du Puy a Saracen plays chess with a Christian king, but for what prize? What is the stake? We do not know. These scenes remain, but their meanings are lost beyond recovery.

At other times the thought of the artist may be interpreted but not by one who runs; only the student familiar with the Bible and with the legends of the Church may read the thought that has been carved upon the stone. For instance, a capital of Royat shows two men, one bearded and the other beardless; one holds a pair of scales, the other carries a knife in one hand while, with the other, he gathers his garment into folds. In essentials the same scene is repeated in the Bible of Rosas, now in the Bibliothèque Nationale. Here the miniaturist shows a man standing in the gateway of a city, a fire burns at his feet and he holds a pair of scales in his hand. On the left of this gateway the same man is shown with a razor in one hand and a pair of shears in the other; on the right he appears again throwing something away with one hand while, with the other, he holds what

looks to be one side of the balances on the outstretched blade of his preposterous razor.

Evidently the artist copies from the miniaturist, but where did the latter get his theme? Read the first four verses of the fifth chapter of Ezekiel, where the story is told. The Lord commanded the prophet to shave his head and his beard, to weigh the shorn hair in his scales, and then divide it into three parts; one part he was bidden to burn, a second he should cast to the winds, while the third part he must keep in the folds of his garment.

Thus, as we have seen, the interpretation of the iconography is sometimes impossible, and sometimes difficult; nevertheless one who is familiar with the stories of the Bible and with the Golden Legend may usually follow the artists of the Eleventh, Twelfth, and Thirteenth Centuries with sympathy and understanding.

The famous portal of Ripoll in Northern Spain, for instance, is rich in the portrayal of biblical scenes, none of which are obscure or hard to read. Here is Daniel between the lions; Cain killing Abel; Jonah emerging from the jaws of the whale; Israel and Amalek, clad in the armour of the Twelfth Century, fighting for the waters of Rephidim. Here Moses brings water from the rock; the manna and the quail are sent for the needs of Israel; David sins in numbering the people and is punished, for the bodies of four dead men, lying beneath the city's walls, indicate that the plague has smitten the city of Jerusalem. All these scenes of Ripoll are faithfully reproduced from the miniatures of the Bible of Farfa, now in the Vatican Library, or from some work that closely resembles it.

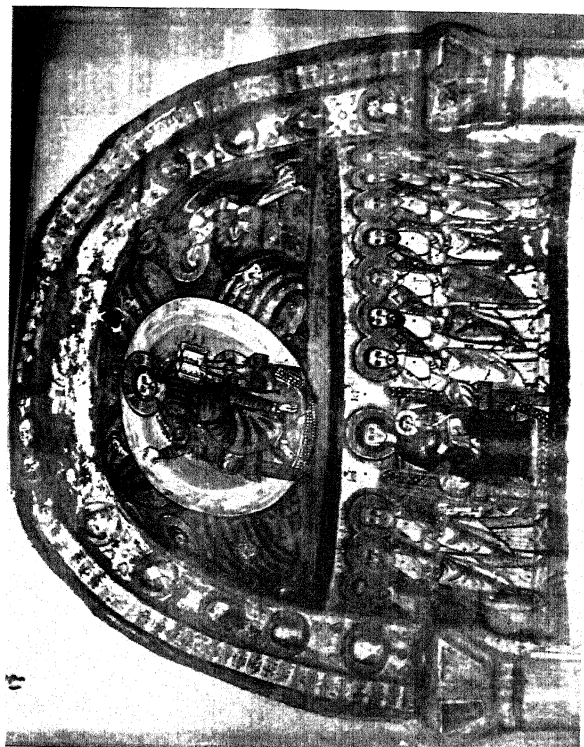
On the portal of Charlieu there is the representation of a theme which also appeared in a contemporary fresco of the Abbey of Lavaudieu, near Brioude. The Virgin sits enthroned as the Queen

of Heaven; two angels stand on either side with the four symbols of the evangelists, while the figures of the twelve apostles complete the composition. Both carving and fresco belong to the Twelfth Century, and it is impossible to say which is the older of the two. It is interesting to find the same theme in one of the chapels of the Sixth Century Church of Baouit, in Upper Egypt; only the angels are missing, and these may be found in a similar scene in another chapel of the same church.

Doubtless illuminated manuscripts brought the theme from Egypt to France, but between the cenobite of Baouit and the monk of Brioude or the nun of Lavaudieu lies a gap of some six hundred years. The colours were laid on the walls of that early Egyptian chapel a hundred years before Jerusalem fell into Moslem hands, but the Holy City had been recaptured by the warriors of the First Crusade when the bas-relief of Brioude and the fresco of Lavaudieu were executed. This fresco, it may be added, disappeared recently with the collapse of a corner of the cloister where the Virgin, with the angels, evangelists, and elders, decorated the tympanum of a portal.

Thus the iconography of Romanesque churches—carved, painted, frescoed, or wrought in glass—reveals the influence of manuscripts that were centuries old, yellow with age, and worn by far travelling.

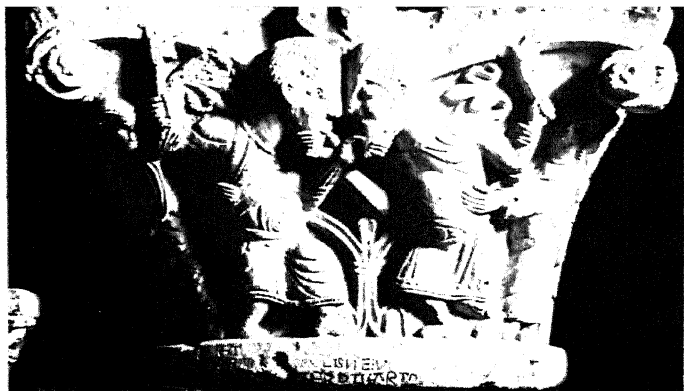
Some of these were inscribed by monks of Africa in the wastes of Libyan deserts or in the semi-tropical heat of the Upper Nile; others came from the waters of Babylon and the uplands of Assyria; some were illuminated in the monasteries of Byzantium, of Asia Minor, or of Syria; others in Macedonia, Greece, or in the isolated cenobitic establishments of Grecian Islands, but though mountain ranges, deserts and seas may have separated



*Columbia Univ. Library*

# APSE PAINTING, CHAPEL OF RAGUFT MONASTERY, EGYPT

Six centuries after this rendition of Christ and His mother enthroned, it is paraphrased in carvings and frescoes of Twelfth Century France. Manuscript paintings inspired it in the East and carried it West.



*Archives Photographique—Paris*

#### SCENES COPIED FROM EARLY MANUSCRIPTS

ABOVE: The two baldheaded men pulling each other's beards on a capital at St. Hilaire, Poitiers, recall a scene pictured in S. Beatus. BELOW: A capital at Mozat (Twelfth Century). Soldiers guard the Holy Sepulchre, thought to be that destroyed by the Persians in 615.



them in their cradles yet, in their age, they came to rest, side by side, on the walls of Romanesque churches.

Mediæval iconography also drew, although less frequently, from the Liturgy of the Church.

In a window of Chartres the scene of the Presentation in the Temple is given in a medallion. Behind the Virgin, presenting the Child to Simeon who receives the Infant with veil-covered hands, appear two women carrying candles. This is an innovation derived directly from the Liturgy. The Feast of the Presentation was celebrated on the second of February by a procession in which each participant carried a lighted candle, the wax representing the humanity of Jesus while the flame spoke of His divinity. It is this liturgical Procession of the Candles which is represented not only in the window of Chartres but also on a small door of the western portal of Rouen. Other instances of the influences of the Liturgy might be cited, but the drama, which had long been an important part of the teaching methods of the Church, had a much greater effect on the iconography than did the Liturgy, and its influence is more generally in evidence.

One of these dramas was enacted in the churches of the West as a part of the celebration of Easter morning. Up to the Eleventh Century the tomb of Christ had been conceived as such a two-storied edifice as may still be seen on the capitals of Mozac, Brioude, or S. Nectaire. This structure recalled the mausoleums of the ancient world, but was also probably influenced by the memories of pilgrims who visited the Holy Sepulchre before the Persians destroyed it in 615, for likenesses of the accepted grave of Jesus, which at least suggest those of Brioude and Mozac, may still be seen on the ampoules of Monza. In the Twelfth Century a different representation of the tomb, that of a sarcophagus—the stone coffin with heavy, triangular

lid—was substituted for the two-storied edifice because of the demands imposed by the Easter drama.

In preparation for this drama something like a ciborium—a structure covered by a canopy supported on columns, enclosed by curtains and concealing the sarcophagus—was erected in a corner of the church.

On the morning of Good Friday a cross, having first been adored by the congregation, was wrapped in a veil and carried in formal procession to the “tomb” which had been prepared for it behind the curtains of the ciborium.

Early on Easter morning, while it was still dark, this cross was quietly removed, only the veil being left behind. All was now ready for the drama which was enacted before the eyes of the congregation after the Easter Mass had been said.

When the Gospel for the Day had been read a monk, clothed in a long white robe, passed down the aisle and took his seat beside the “tomb” to represent the angel at the sepulchre. Then three other monks, taking the part of the Holy Women, advanced slowly and hesitantly down the aisle carrying censers in their hands. When they halted at the tomb the angel spoke. “Whom seek ye?” he asked; “Jesus of Nazareth,” replied the “women.” “He is not here,” rang out the triumphant answer. “He is risen as He said; behold the place where the Lord lay.” Then he tore open the curtains, revealing the empty sarcophagus and the folded veil. The “women,” seizing the cloth that had been wrapped around the cross, held it high above their heads and sang joyously, “The Lord is risen”; as at a signal the entire congregation took up the song, while all the bells of the town, village, or city rang the tidings over all the country-side. Such a service was probably held in all the churches of France from

Carlovingian days onwards, and the substitution of the sarcophagus for the tomb in two stories is due to this dramatic recital. To cite but one instance there is a bas-relief at Dax where two angels lift the heavy triangular stone lid to show the empty sepulchre to the women while hands, reaching down from the clouds, swing the censers or hold the cross. The censers, and especially the cross, reveal the connexion with the drama in which they played their important parts.

One more illustration of the effect of the drama on the iconography may be given, partly because of its connexion with the "Tree of Jesse" theme so often presented in glass, in bas-reliefs, or in paintings, as on the ceiling of S. Michael's at Hildesheim. After the middle of the Twelfth Century the ancestry of Jesus is frequently represented in the form of a tree which springs from the loins of a sleeping Jesse, bearing in its branches the kings of Judah, the ancestors who spanned the gap between David and the Christ. In the windows, as at S. Denis and Chartres, the border is formed by the superimposed figures of the prophets who foretold the coming of the Messiah. The drama reflected in these windows, or in the bas-reliefs, was performed on Christmas Day when, in many churches of Europe, the Jews were compelled to attend the services in the hope that, by listening to the sermon and by beholding the drama, they might be turned from their "erroneous" ways; their real feelings, however, are probably more accurately recorded by Browning who satirizes this compulsory service in his poem *Holy Cross Day*.

When the Jews reached the porch of the church their ears were examined to make sure that these had not been stopped by cotton or by wax; then they were ushered into the church and seated, while watchful proctors walked softly up and down the

aisles throughout the two-hour service to make sure that no drowsy Jew missed any gesture of the preacher or word of the drama.

"You, O Jews," cried the preacher, "you who have been summoned here have, to this day, denied the Son of God. Do you wish a witness to this Christ? Is it not written in your own Law that the truth shall be established by the mouths of two witnesses? Let, then, the men of your own Law stand forth; indeed there shall be more than two to convince you. Speak now, Isaiah; bear thy witness to this Christ." Thus adjured, "Isaiah" stepped forth and began to pass down the aisle, crying aloud, "Behold, a Virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and his name shall be called 'Emanuel.'"

"Let another advance," said the preacher. "Bear thy witness, O Jeremiah." And "Jeremiah" appeared and testified, following "Isaiah" down the aisle.

So one after another, in a long procession that passed down the aisles between rows of sullen Jews, the "prophets" wended their way.

But the roll call of these prophets was quite different from that in the canonical lists. It included not merely the accepted major and minor prophets, but also Abraham, Moses, Aaron, David, Elizabeth, and John the Baptist. Curiously enough it also included Balaam, Nebuchadrezzar, Virgil, and the Sibyl. Balaam is here because he foretold to Balak "there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel."

Nebuchadrezzar figures in the scene because once he saw "One like unto the Son of Man" standing with the three Hebrews, in the flames of his fiery furnace. Virgil and the Sibyl walk with the prophets because the first foretold a "new prodigy descend-



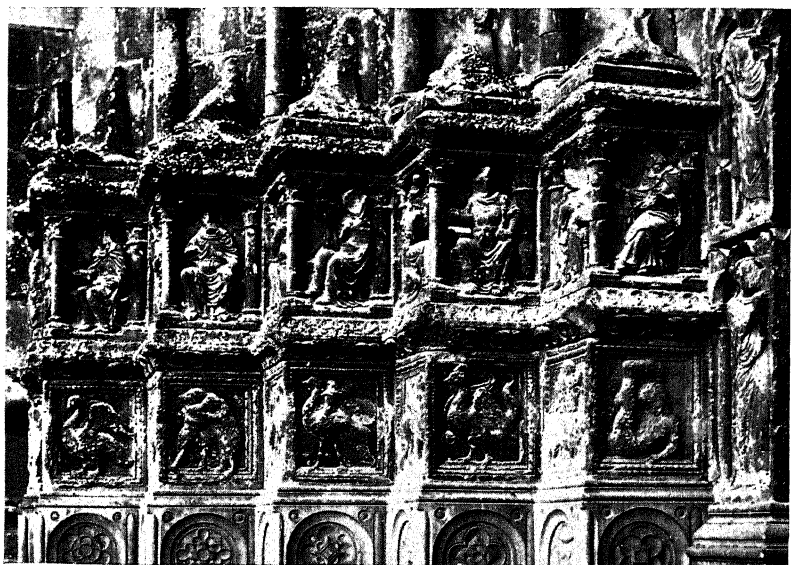
*Archives Photographique—Paris*

#### THE TREE OF JESSE

Stained glass in Autun Cathedral. Beginning in the Twelfth Century, the ancestry of Jesus is frequently represented in the form of a tree which, springing from the loins of a sleeping Jesse, bears in its branches the Kings of Judah through whom the Christ was descended from David.



*Princeton Univ. Lib'y.*



*Archives Photographique—Paris*

#### ANGELS AND UNEARTHLY CREATURES

ABOVE: The Easter drama, from the church at Dax (Twelfth Century). Two angels lift the triangular stone to show the Holy Women that the sepulchre is empty. BELOW: Pedestal carvings from Sens Cathedral. Fabulous creatures, including pygmies, the basilisk, and—shading his head with his foot—the sciapod, or uniped.

ing from the heights of heaven," and the second prophesied, "A sign of Judgment; a king shall come from heaven to rule the ages."

When one turns from the drama to the iconography the connexion between the two is evidenced by the figures of the same prophets in the borders of the "Tree of Jesse" windows, in the bas-reliefs of Notre-Dame la Grande at Poitiers, at Cremona, Ferrara, and Verona, for these are not taken from the canonical lists, but from the Drama of the Prophets.

There are other dramas, too, whose influence may be seen in the iconography, some of which were enacted in the streets of the city as well as in the churches. In bas-reliefs on an altar of S. Eustorgio, in Milan, three kings ride at the head of a great cortège; camels carrying their baggage are followed by servants, attendants, by more horses and here or there a dog.

If one could go back to the streets of the city on the 6th of January 1336, one would hear the bells of all the churches loudly pealing as a great procession, led by three kings magnificently apparelled, left the portals of S. Maria delle Grazie. Through crowded streets, past houses and palaces whose windows and balconies were filled with spectators, the cortège went its way until it came to the Church of S. Lorenzo where "Herod," surrounded by his councillors, sat upon his throne. The kings dismounted, bowed before the throne and were questioned by the royal Edomite as to the purpose of their coming. Were they seeking a child whom prophets said should be King of the Jews, and where did they expect to find him? The interrogation over, the kings mounted and rode on to S. Eustorgio where a crèche had been prepared before the high altar; here the magi worshipped and laid down their gifts. Then, in the sight of the multitude

who filled the aisles, they lay down to rest, falling into a deep slumber as an angel drew near to warn them not to revisit Herod but to return to their own country by another way. Awakening and again remounting they returned to the church from which they had set out, without repassing the Church of S. Lorenzo—the palace of the Edomite.

Once more: a capital at Clermont-Ferrand represents Adam tearing the hair of Eve and booting her with his foot as he cries:

“O evil woman, full of treason  
Who didst hurl me to perdition,  
When you stole my sense and reason.”

Even the action of our first Father's hand and foot are prescribed in the text that accompanies the dialogue of this “Jeu d'Adam” which ordains: “Then he shall lift his hand against Eve and, shaking his head with great indignation, shall say:

“Oï male femme, pleine de traison  
Tant m'as mis tost en perdicion  
Cum me tolis le sens et la raison.”<sup>2</sup>

There is also the Drama of the Holy Women (who, curiously enough, are represented as buying their spices for the embalming of the body of Jesus with a due regard for economy) and the dramatized story of the Fall of Man.<sup>3</sup>

Thus the monk, familiar from the days of his novitiate with these age-old tales, turned actor or artist that he might impress their lessons on all who came beneath his influence. He dramatized the stories of the Bible and the legends of the Church; then he enacted the scenes of his dramas before the congregations

<sup>2</sup> Louis Bréhier, *L'Art Chrétien*, p. 212.

<sup>3</sup> Bas-reliefs at S. Gilles, Beaucaire, and Modena. *Mâle*, Vol. I, pp. 133 ff.



and, when the play was over, he retold the stories in the medallions of his windows or in the bas-reliefs of his capitals and portals.

ÉMILE MÂLE, Vol. I, Chaps. I, IV, V and VIII; Vol. II, pp. 36 ff.; Vol. III, Chap. III, pp. 69 ff.

LOUIS BRÉHIER, *L'Art Chrétien*, Chap. VII, pp. 212 ff.

## Chapter Seven

### BEASTS, GHOSTS, DEVILS,—AND WOMEN

NOT content with the world they knew, the monks sent their imaginations travelling into the Unknown to bring back strange lessons from queer lands.

Their own world was not different from that which the Romans had known and explored, but beyond its frontiers lay lands of mists and shadows inhabited by strange animals and by even stranger beings. These creatures of poetic fancy, dwellers in a twilight zone, had a resistless fascination for the artist of the Middle Ages who constantly reproduced in glass or in bas-reliefs figures that were thousands of years old when he first saw the light.

Four hundred years before our era Ctesias, a Greek of Cnidus, was the Court Physician of Artaxerxes, king of Persia. In the palace, at Susa or at Ecbatana, he heard the talk of soldiers and of royal messengers who had had dealings with the people of India; he met, and possibly ministered to, the ambassadors of Indian kings. All the tales, the rumours and adventures told by the Munchausens of his day, Ctesias wrote down and thus they came to the knowledge of the Grecian world. A century later Megasthenes, the ambassador of Seleucus Nicator to King Chandragupta, reached Patna beyond Benares; his account of his voyage is replete with marvels, soberly related, but which closely resemble those reported by Ctesias.

These tales passed from hand to hand; Pliny the Elder includes



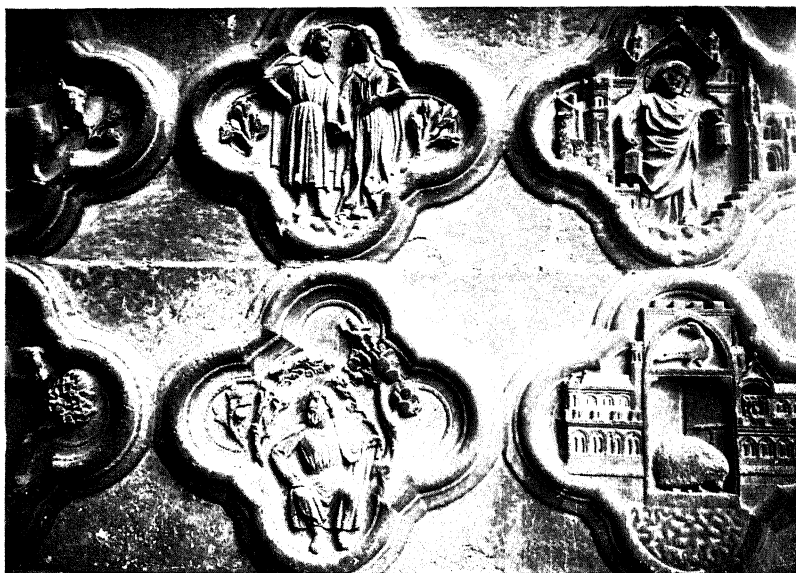
*Archives Photographique - Paris*

**TYMPANUM FROM THE GREAT PORTAL, VÉZELAY ABBEY**

The Pentecost, as described by Honorius of Autun. The rays descending from the fingers of Christ indicate the gift of tongues to His disciples. In the surrounding panels the disciples speak to all the sons of Adam, to each in his own tongue. The Cynocephali (upper left) and the panotii (lower right) are among those discussing miracles or awaiting conversion.



*Princeton Univ. Lib'y.*



*Archives Photographique—Paris*

#### DETAIL IN THE CARVING

ABOVE: From the western portal, Vézelay. The panotii, who can fold their ears about their heads. BELOW: Pedestal carvings, Amiens Cathedral (Thirteenth Century). Symbolic are the Light of the World, and Nineveh deserted, the haunt of bittern and hedgehog.

some of them in his *Natural History*; Solinus gives them credence in his *Polyhistory*; S. Augustine knew them well, and in his day a public square in Carthage possessed a mosaic in which these fabulous beings were represented—the sciapods, the cynocephali, the pygmies, and others of like legendary origin. From the pagan these tales entered the Christian world; Isidore of Seville included them in a chapter of his *Etymologies* in the Seventh Century; Rabanus Maurus and Honorius of Autun took the tales from the hands of Isidore and passed them on to the sculptors and the glaziers of the Twelfth Century.

On a column of Souvigny many of these fabulous creatures are inscribed. Here is the sciapod, possessing but a single leg yet able to run at a marvellous speed. Sometimes he lies outstretched on the ground, using his one foot as a parasol to protect his head from a burning sun. Here, too, is the hippopod, with a man's body and the hoofs of a horse; and the satyr, with the horns and the hoofs of a goat; the Ethiopian with his four eyes; and the cynocephalus, who carries the head of a dog on the body of a man.

In the Museum of Nevers some capitals from the destroyed Church of S. Sauveur add to this catalogue the mantichore, who outspeeds the swiftest bird and hisses like a serpent through the face of a man.

The list of these marvellous creatures, illustrated in the iconography, is long; it includes the unicorn, the faun, the elephant, the pygmies, barely two inches in height but perfectly formed; the griffin—guardian of treasures—half eagle and half lion; the dragon, and a great host of all their kith and kin. Some of these are represented on the column of Souvigny, some on the western portal of the Cathedral of Sens, and others still in the carvings of S. Lazare at Autun.

The great western portal of Vézelay may be understood only in the light of this ancient and mythological geography.

In the centre of the tympanum a gigantic Christ sits enthroned, encircled by the aureole; from His extended fingers rays descend and fall upon the heads of the disciples. Obviously the artist is presenting to us the scene of Pentecost and the Descent of the Holy Spirit. Around this central scene, in a great arch, a series of panels are arranged each of which contains two, three, or four figures of men who seem to be discussing something recently seen or heard. One is calling attention to his foot, another to his leg, a third to his arm, while a fourth lays bare his breast.

The meaning of the artist is interpreted for us by a sermon of Honorius of Autun who tells us that the disciples, each of whom was sent to a different country, converted a great multitude by the exercise of the powers which had been conferred upon them at Pentecost. By virtue of that power they had preached the gospel to all the world, speaking to each nation in its own tongue, and working countless miracles. They gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, made the lame to walk, cleansed the lepers, expelled devils, and raised the dead.

The scenes carved in the panels of the arch at Vézelay represent the missions of the disciples; here we see the peoples of pagan lands discussing among themselves the truth which has been preached to them, each in his own language, by the disciples of Jesus, and exhibiting to one another the palsied limbs that have received new power, the leprosy that has been cleansed, the effects of the miracles, whatever they may have been, which converted them to the faith.

In one of these panels the cynocephali appear, for this strange race of dog-headed men were, in the thought of the Church, sons of Adam and victims of his Fall.

In the days of Louis the Pious, S. Rimbart, about to depart on a missionary journey to the far North, wrote to Ratramnus, a monk of Corby, asking for information regarding the cynocephali whom he fully expected to encounter in the land of Cimmerian night whither he was going.

Ratramnus replied that the ancients assured us that these cynocephali shared our powers of reason, that they had their flocks and herds, knew how to weave stuffs for their garments, and formed a true nation. Indeed, S. Christopher himself had been a cynocephalus.

This belief explains the presence of these dog-headed figures at Vézelay, for they represent a race of beings who await in darkness the coming of the Light.

Among other strange peoples represented on this lintel are the panotii, with their huge ears enfolding their heads as an oyster is encased in his shell; and the pygmies in the person of a tiny dwarf who places a ladder at the side of a horse he is preparing to mount. Other beings appear, marching towards two tall figures who stand in the centre of the lintel and probably represent SS. Peter and Paul, the symbols of Rome and the Church.

On the other side of the lintel, not quite so easy to understand, moves another procession, also towards the centre; one of the figures is quite nude, others carry the bow and the quiver of arrows. Taken as a whole, they seem to represent the races of the pagan world. Some of these processionists carry offerings—a fish, bread, a high cup, and a pail—while at their head march the sacrificers, leading a bull and carrying an axe. Near the figures of SS. Peter and Paul, in the centre of the lintel, a pagan high priest awaits the coming of these who still ignorantly worship

their false gods, but upon whom the light of a divine revelation is about to fall.

Still another source of inspiration to the artist was supplied by the bestiaries, a popular collection of fables concerning the animal world. S. Basil illustrates at length the evidences which prove that the Creator of the world had intended every created thing to represent a thought of the Divine Mind, and from this purpose not even the animals were excluded. Therefore if the lion sleeps with his eyes open it is to remind men of the Christ who kept His watch throughout the night of the Tomb, while waiting the morning of His resurrection.

The same "king of beasts" was, in another way, a symbol of the risen Christ and of the immortality of all believers; for on the third day after the lioness had given birth to whelps that were, to all seeming, born dead the lion came and, standing over the dead cubs, breathed upon them and by the life-giving power of his breath quickened their limbs and bodies. Even so the Almighty, sending forth the breath of His Spirit upon Him whom men had crucified and sealed in the sepulchre, raised Him up and sent Him forth that all men might know that Death had lost his sting, and the Grave his victory.

A capital in the nave at Le Mans shows an owl about to be attacked by the birds who have surrounded it. What better figure than the owl, who flies by night and is blinded by the sun, could be found for the Jews who have preferred darkness to the Light of the World and have thereby made themselves an object of derision to all other peoples?

At Tarragona in Spain, at Alne in Yorkshire, and at Modena in Italy, bas-reliefs show a fox who is evidently dead, for cocks of the barnyard bear him to his grave or birds of the air come down to feed upon his body. But the cunning fox has only



feigned death that he may tempt the birds within his reach; then he suddenly leaps into action and seizes the nearest by the throat. Even so does Satan, assuming an innocent and harmless guise, deceive and entice us.

The legends of the bestiaries, well known in every seaport and doubtless fearfully whispered from lip to ear by those who sailed with Columbus, said that the whale covered his back with the sands of the sea and then rested on the surface of the water. Seeds, dropped by birds in their flight, germinated in this sand and grass, shrubs, and even trees took root and grew until the whale acquired the semblance of an island. When sailors, misled by this appearance, landed on the whale's back he would suddenly plunge into the depths, carrying down with him both boat and crew. Even so Satan deceives all those who put their trust in his fair appearance, dragging them down to the depths of Hell.

On the pulpit of Forrabury, in Cornwall, there is carved in wood the theme of the hart and of the dragon who goes in deadly fear. When the hart sees the dragon he goes to the nearest stream and fills his stomach full of water; seeing this, the terrified dragon flies to a refuge among the rocks. The hart follows, hunts out his hiding place, and then disgorges the water into the crevice where the dragon lies concealed, thus driving him out into the open where he cuts him to pieces with his sharp hoofs. Even so our Lord followed Satan into the depths of Hell and, pouring out the blood and water from his side, slew him with the waters of regeneration. At Forrabury the hart appears at the top of the carving, moving in haste, while the cleft in the rocks is portrayed below, with the head of the dragon peering out at one end and his tail showing at the other.

So these tales and legends, passed on from age to age, told in the pulpit, read in the bestiaries, related in the wine-shops, or re-

cited to the children in the firelight of winter evenings, were taken up by the artists and translated into stone or glass. Moreover, the sculptor and the glazier had a somewhat larger measure of freedom in their work, because there was no really hard and fast Science of Symbolism. Many of these tales sprang from the popular mind and were practically forced upon the priests, who willingly accepted those that taught a moral lesson. But the lesson varied with the time, the place, and the priest.

For instance: a little bas-relief on the porch of Amiens shows the gate of a city with a bird and a beast in sole possession. The artist has taken for his text the threat of Zephaniah against Nineveh<sup>1</sup> which reads, in the Douay version, "The Lord shall make the beautiful city a wilderness . . . and the bittern and the urchin [the hedgehog] shall lodge in the threshold thereof." But who is the hedgehog and what does he mean?

Petrus Bechorius, who died in 1362, says he is "a little beast that . . . is clothed with prickles instead of hair . . . for all the nutriment of his body goeth to make prickles. Such, my dear brethren, are rich and worldly folk, who have a little body (that is, little grace and virtue) . . . but are thick set all around with thorns (that is, with riches) that are prickly and disquieting to the mind and heart." But the same beast, according to Isidore of Seville (Seventh Century), is the symbol of the unworthy churchman, for "he climbeth trees or vines, casteth down the fruit or the grapes and then rolleth in them. When he is stuck all over with the fruits he goeth home to nourish his young therewith. Therefore he is the type of evil men who hold high office in the Church; for such men climb into high office as into trees, and thus get, collect, and accumulate fruit (that is, worldly wealth)

<sup>1</sup> Zephaniah ii. 14.

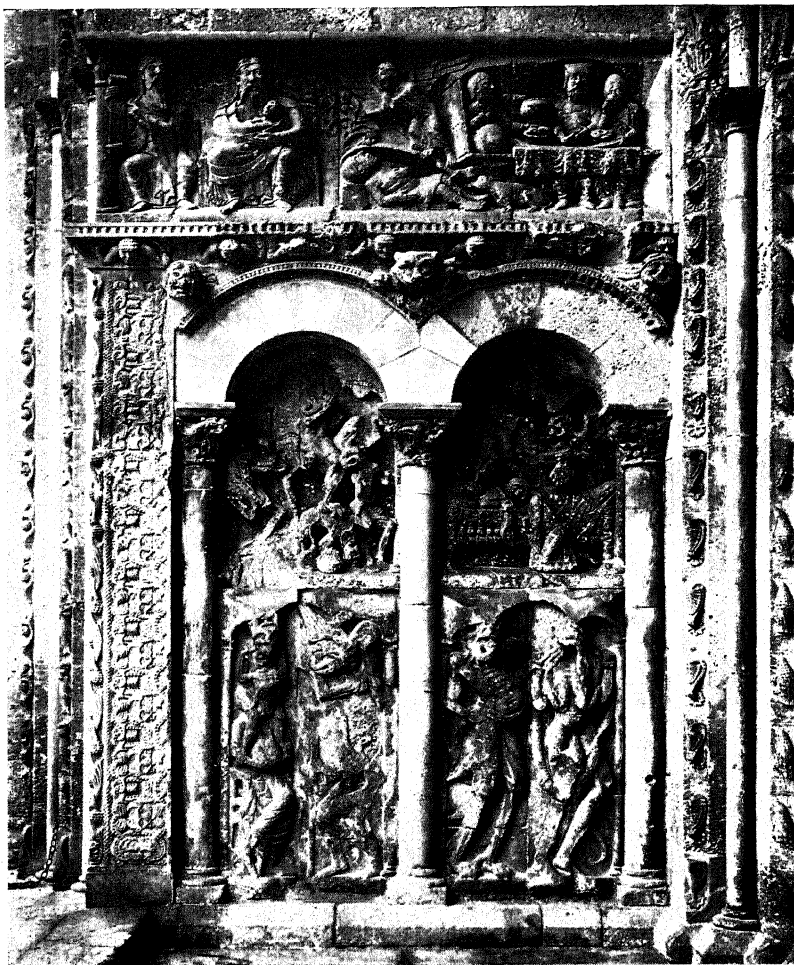
not attending to the profit of the people . . . but only to their own gain."

Then Bechorius goes around to the other side of the hedgehog, sees him in a different light and from another angle and lo! the beast becomes the symbol of the perfect Christian. Since the hedgehog has five stomachs (he has lost four of them since Bechorius' day), each to care for a particular stage in the process of digestion, he and his stomachs become the representative of the good and righteous man who knows five ways, or stages of thought, when he meditates upon God and upon His Word.

Again, rolled into a round ball when threatened by his foes, the animal becomes the type of the pure and prayerful life, protected against the assaults of evil by its absorption in holy contemplation. Finally since Aristotle tells us of a Byzantine whose tame hedgehog foretold the weather by running in or out of his hole, thereby bringing to his owner great repute and much profit, both of which were really due the beast and not the man, the prophetic hedgehog reminds us that "there are many folk in this world who exploit what they have learned from others as though it were their own native wisdom." Wherefore the author hastily states that all this information about the hedgehog may be found in G. G. Coulton's *Art and the Reformation*, pages 270 to 272.

There was another, and more sombre, aspect to the art of the Romanesque Period. The churches of this age were usually built by monks, and their bas-reliefs, whether on monastic abbeys or parish churches, bear the clear imprint of the cloistered life and thought, of the fears of men to whom the Devil was very real and ever near.

Perhaps you have passed without noticing a bronze wolf on the portals of the Cathedral of Aachen; if you had noticed and



*Archives Photographique—Paris*

# GREAT PORTAL, MOISSAC: LEFT

The parable of Dives and Lazarus, above, with the poor in Abraham's bosom. Below, Twelfth Century nightmares in stone—in particular, Woman the Temptress, with devouring toads and serpents.

diabolic rage; an invisible hand seized "the first to enter the church," broke his neck and back, and hurled the lifeless body against a pillar of the nave. Thunders echoed from wall to wall, flashes of lightning so illumined the saints in the jewelled windows that all without could see their every line. Yellow clouds of smoke filled the cathedral, rose to the vault and rolled down again to the pavement whence they billowed out through the portals, hiding the church in a sulphuric fog. Slowly the air cleared and the little priest, holding the cross before him, mounted the steps and entered the church followed by the clergy, the City Council, and the people—but for many days the scent of the brimstone clung to the aisles. This is the tale the bronze wolf on the portal would have told you had you stopped to listen.

Indeed, in most of the tales of these years the Devil dominates the stage. The pages of the *Chronicle of Raoul Glaber*, of the *Ecclesiastical History of Ordericus Vitalis*, and the *Book of Miracles of Peter the Venerable* permit us to see a cellular life that vibrated between a world of realities and one of dreams which were often nightmares. To the monks there were no frontiers dividing the world visible from that which was invisible; indeed there was no world at all that was always sealed from the eyes of men. The brethren spoke with the dead almost as freely as with the living, and with no more emotion; their encounters with the unfleshed were constant and real to them.

A monk of Cluny, climbing the stairs leading to his dormitory, met a brother of recent days who had left his new-made grave to entreat the prayers of the Order for the repose of his soul.

A lay brother, returning by night along a forest pathway to his home, was confronted by the spirit of a baron who had died on the pilgrimage road to Rome but who, in his lifetime, had terrorized the country-side by deeds of cruelty and violence. A fox-

skin, thrown across the shoulders, was his only dress. "It is the same skin," replied the baron to the brother's question, "which once I gave a beggar; now it protects me from the flames of Purgatory, and cools me marvellously."

At night when the monks, meeting around the monastery fires, had permission to converse together, strange tales were told. At S. Evroul, in Normandy, the monk Gauchelin told of an army of ghosts which he had seen fleeing through the night in wild haste and with a terrible noise from a terror that had no name.

There were infantry, marching swiftly; and others who bore coffins on their shoulders; monks, hiding their faces in their hoods, were followed by knights in armour mounted on gigantic black horses and carrying black banners; one such touched Gauchelin's face and left on his cheek the marks of fingers that were hot with the fires of Hell.

Peter the Venerable tells of a young novice who entered the cemetery of the priory of Charlieu one night, and felt his blood run through all his veins with the chill of ice when he saw, by the dim light of the *Lanterne des Morts*, dead monks seated on the stones that lined the cemetery, gathered in solemn assembly to discuss that which it was not good for living men to hear.

Angels were not unknown visitors to the monasteries but they revealed their presence only to the purest of pure souls; one saint, esteemed of God, saw an angel enter the infirmary of Cluny to bless the stone couch where dying monks were laid on beds of ashes to await the moment of their summons.

Sometimes these angelic visitants could be heard, if they might not be seen. Brother Gerard was privileged one night to listen in an ecstasy to celestial melodies which filled the vaults of the dark and deserted church. Visitors from another and more

dreaded world were, however, far more frequent, for devils and demons were the monks' most terrible and persistent foes.

From the moment the Christian entered the monastic life he had everything to fear from these determined and subtle enemies. Gilbert of Nogent tells of a novice who had to grip the habit he had just assumed with teeth as well as hands to keep the demons from tearing it off his body. The monastery was, in truth, an entrenched camp besieged by an enemy and the holier the monastery, the more vigorous the assault.

Once a monk, keeping a midnight vigil with the Psalter in his hands, saw a procession of devils traverse his corridor; moving slowly, with heads hidden in their hoods, they filled his soul with terror, not only by their numbers but even more by their silence and their gravity.

The supernatural, which took so strong a hold on the imaginations of the monastic world, could not fail to leave its imprint in the art of monastic churches.

Many of the bas-reliefs that reflect this world of night and terror spring from tales and legends which have been forgotten in our day, wherefore the interpretation of the carvings has been lost with the stories that gave them birth.

Here is an eagle which has seized a dog in its talons and a child in its beak while a devil, his mouth split wide to the ears, rocks with laughter. Again, at Vézelay, an angel of a capital has caught the two arms of a demon and twists them behind his back; the devil obviously would be glad to run away but the angel holds him prisoner. Doubtless the artist and his age knew well the tales these carvings represent, but only the chisel has preserved them for us.

The devils that figure on the capitals of Vézelay seem born of a nightmare, and in truth we have here before our eyes the

projections of the ghastly dreams of terrified monks. This Satan, born of the *cauchemars* of monastic cells, is quite different from that other Satan whom men had known, feared, and fought in earlier centuries; the art of the catacombs knew him not; the Greeks could never have conceived him in this form.

The religion of the earlier centuries had been one of hope and not of fear; faith then moved in an atmosphere of serenity and peace.

One of the oldest representations of Satan appears in an illuminated Greek manuscript of the Ninth Century which is preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale. This manuscript, illustrated with miniatures which seem to have been copied from others of the Sixth Century, portrays Satan in the hour of the Temptation. He is evidently a fallen angel, a being who had once been a "Son of God" but who had revolted from the just rule of his Creator. He still preserves the imprint of his high origin and, with his wings, differs from the angels of Light only in the fact that he is semi-nude, and that his face has the sombre violet colour that characterizes the oriental night.

Throughout all the early centuries the Greek imagination remained serene and lofty, seeing nothing brutal even in a Satan who was never hideous in Byzantine art; at Daphni, trampled beneath the feet of Christ, he maintains the pride of a rebel even in defeat, as did the conquered heroes of old bas-reliefs.

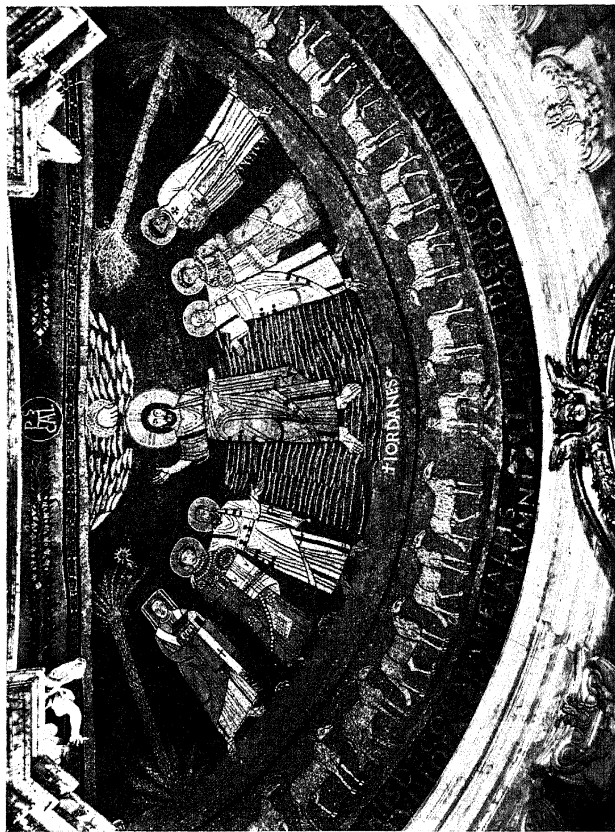
In Greek gospels of the Eleventh Century, the exact period of Vézelay, Satan is a small winged figure of sombre colour, very like the "eidolons" of Greek funeral vases—those images of the soul set free from the body yet for a time lingering above its abandoned abode. It needed the monks of the Eleventh Century to conceive and give substance to that fearful being whose revolting-form appears so often in the carvings of Western churches.





THE FALL OF MAN; WEST FRONT, ORVIEO CATHEDRAL

By Giovanni Pisano (Fourteenth Century). An integral part of the drama which ended with the Atonement, the Fall was frequently carved on churches as a reminder that Christ was the new Adam who had freed men from the consequences of Adam's sin.



APSE MOSAIC, S. PRASSEDE, ROME

Christ (Ninth Century) flanked by the four evangelists and SS. Peter and Paul; the Baptism symbolized by water lines and the name "Jordan." Lower, from beneath the Lamb run the four rivers of grace that flowed from the pens of the evangelists.

This representation of the Lord of Hell appears first in the Apocalypse of S. Severin where Satan is shown with his thin body, his bristling hair, and with bat's wings that are armed with stings. And so we shall hereafter see him—at Moissac, at Beaulieu, at Souillac.

At Souillac he resembles a drying mummy beneath the parchment of whose skin the bones and sinews show; here is one, we instinctively feel, who has just issued from the kingdom of the dead. His face is no longer human; pouches, uniting the chin to the neck, give the aspect of a toad; the nose is stretched out into a porcine snout; the terrible eyes are deep sunken into cavernous and sombre sockets; only the little wings remain to remind us that this monster was once an angel although now fallen to depths deeper than man's imagination may conceive.

In the art of Burgundy Satan appears in the form of a dwarf; the chest is protuberant, the forehead low, and the powerful jaw, disclosed by a sinister grin, is that of an animal.

Trait for trait, the figure on a capital of Vézelay corresponds to that of a vision which thrice appeared to Raoul Glaber, as he recorded it in his writings; and what Raoul Glaber saw in the visions of the night appears at Vézelay, in stone, emerging from the mouth of the Golden Calf as Moses casts down and breaks the Tables of the Law.

The force with which Satan was invested by the monks of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries belongs to that age alone; born and dying with it, it never again appeared. The Devil of the Thirteenth Century is never a monster but only a man, degraded by his viciousness. In the Fourteenth Century he sinks almost to the level of the comic figures of the religious theatre. Only the dreaming monk of the Eleventh Century, terrified by his

nightmares, knew how to conceive and present the inner viciousness of Evil.

And the Romanesque monk thought his own thoughts about woman. He might bend the knee to the Virgin Mary, and bow



THE DEVIL CONSUMING SINNERS

Horror is reduced to an almost comic absurdity in this Fourteenth Century drawing on the wall of the Campo Santo in Pisa. (From M. Didron, *Christian Iconography*.)

before the Holy Women at the Sepulchre, but in his inmost thoughts woman had her place, and wherever that place might be it was no fit place for man.

The battle the male had to fight against the female left its imprint in the art of the century. At Autun a youth is represented looking at a nude woman who has, it is true, no great

beauty but who possesses a sort of sinuous grace. Her back is turned towards her victim as she throws a glance at him over her shoulder at the very moment when Satan appears to seize the young man by the hair of his head. One sees by the coiffure of the woman, whose hair bristles even as does that of Satan, that she is his accomplice and a daughter of Hell.

A strange capital at Vézelay seems to repeat the thought of an Oriental who once called woman "the lyre of Satan," for the Devil appears playing on the rigid body of a woman as on a harp, while a magician, himself one of the Devil's disciples and aids, joins his melody with that of Hell.

A terrible scene is carved on the portal of Moissac where one sees the body of a woman, naked and thin, being devoured by toads and serpents. Never was temptress more rudely flayed. This theme, of man revenged by vipers, spread throughout the South of France and may be seen in many places. From the Midi it entered the art of the Centre and of the West; Burgundy welcomed it, and at Vézelay the serpent winds his sinuous length around the limbs of a woman who, with mouth wide open and bristling hair, thrusts a sword into her breast; for woman, the companion of Vice, is also become the symbol of Despair.

In pre-Christian days, however, the image of the nude woman surrounded by animals, with serpents twisting around her body and drinking from her breasts, was the symbol of that fecund Nature who is the Mother of us all, from whose bountiful bosom all life drinks. But the myopic vision of the monk, who always looked askance upon the feminine, changed the Mother to the Mistress, made her the symbol of Luxury, and sent serpents to devour her.

Thus in the very days when the Court of Love was being held at Les Baux, at Arles, Toulouse and throughout the South, when

the voices of the troubadours were loudly and melodiously proclaiming the beauty of woman and the joys of love, the monks were steadfastly portraying the Daughter of Eve as the Accomplice of Satan, the Temptress of the Sons of Adam as she had been of their first father, as the supreme peril of the soul, the bright image of Vice, and the dark symbol of Despair. If monks could have their way, toads and serpents should pasture on her flesh. The monk may have been earnest, devout, and sincere, but there was little of humour and less of chivalry in his education.

ÉMILE MÂLE, Vol. I, Chaps. IX and X.

## Chapter Eight

### THE MEDIÆVAL MASON-ARTIST

ON a column of the church at Rospley, in Lincolnshire, Thomas Bates of Corby carved his name; "Ista columna," he wrote with his chisel, "facta fuit ad festum sancti Michaelis anno domini M<sup>o</sup>ccc<sup>o</sup>lxxx<sup>o</sup> et nomen factoris Thomas Bates de Corby." "This pillar was made on Michaelmas Day A.D. 1380, and the name of him who made it is Thomas Bates of Corby."

The quarry from which the column came has doubtless long since vanished, buried beneath some town or village, beneath ploughed fields or pasture lands. Gone, too, is Thomas Bates of Corby, leaving only a mark to tell us that he was a man of like parts and passions with ourselves who lived, felt the heat and the wet, hunger and thirst, who jested and laughed as he walked the English roads in search of work and who, when he found it, cut his stones honestly, set them worthily, and felt the satisfaction of good workmanship.

G. G. Coulton has drawn a picture of him or of his like, which although born of the imagination may well be closer to truth than to fiction.

By the autumn of 1417 the stone work on the nave of S. Nicholas, at Lynn, was finished. The masons had confessed, attended Mass, breakfasted, and were about to take the road again in search of work, but one of them, Robert Piggot, walking slowly up the aisle, marked carefully the stones that bore his mark and passed his hand lovingly over each column that he

had set. "Ay," he half whispered to himself, "they will mount up at the Day of Doom." "Mount up whither, man?" "Mount up to my reckoning, William Hindley. There's nothing heavier than stone, in a common way, and there must be twenty or thirty hundredweight of mine here in this church, all cut as honestly as a man can cut them. So the blessed S. Nicholas will see to it that every stone goes into my scales at Doomsday; and the Devil may pull as hard as he will at t'other, yet I trust that mine shall weigh him down."

So trusting Robert Piggot, with William Hindley and his fellow masons, left the church, took the road to the ferry in the early autumn haze, and vanish from our sight leaving here and there a name or an initial cut in the stones they laid to remind us that the builders of these churches were born as we are born, lived as we live, and vanished as we shall vanish. They did not belong to another planet, to a different order of beings, only to another century and a different generation.

We are, however, too curious about Thomas Bates of Corby, Robert Piggot, and William Hindley to be satisfied with a name or an initial cut in a stone. We want to know whence they came, how they were trained, under what conditions they worked, what were their hours of labour and what their pay. How did the boy who began with the rough work in the quarries become the artist who carved and set the tracery for the West Window at York, the portals of Lichfield, or the vaults of Gloucester's cloister? What was his standing in his world, and how was he esteemed?

Whence did they come, Robert Piggot, William Hindley, and Lente, who never outgrew his boyhood but "worstlyed [wrestled] and playde, and ran about in werkyng tyme" until a fine brought a temporary sobriety?



They came from the farms, the sheepfolds, or from the little shops in the country towns when workers were needed in the quarries. Perhaps they volunteered, often they were conscripted by royal or ecclesiastical authority, and set to the task of quarrying stone for castle or cathedral. Of necessity the quarries they worked were above ground—the slope of some hill—for their centuries knew no way of draining the seepage of rain, snow, or underground springs from sunken quarries. Underground quarries could not be worked until the Seventeenth Century invented the bucket and chain, but even this was too slow and clumsy for effective drainage. Not until Watt invented the steam engine in the Eighteenth Century could the quarryman venture below the surface of the ground, where he was aided by John Coster, gent. and by John Coster Jun. gent. who received a grant on May 27th, 1714, for their newly invented engine for drawing water out of deep mines. Here, in all kinds of weather, except when winter locked the ground, the boy from the farm began to hew the rock from the hillside with axe, pick, chisel, wedge or lever. He received little training, for the system of apprenticeship did not develop until the mediæval period had passed. In earlier years the wandering life of the mason militated against the system.

Other gilds, the carpenters, plasterers, smiths, saddlers, furriers, clothiers, and shoemakers, who had their little shops and a local trade, could take apprentices and teach them, but the masons, constantly on the road travelling from task to task, were less able to board and lodge aspirants through the apprentice years, nor did the master-masons look with favour on the stones that were spoiled by apprentice hands. A father might teach his son, an uncle his nephew, or a brother his younger brother; now and then we find contracts which provide that a master-mason

with a life appointment shall undertake the training of boys in the mason's craft, but usually each beginner must start in the quarries and be self-taught.

However, he had this much of opportunity. Because the cost of cartage was high—at Vale Royal between 1278 and 1280 it cost 347 English pounds sterling to cart 35,000 loads of stone from the quarries to the abbey, four or five miles away, while it only cost 104 pounds to quarry it—masons were often sent to the quarries to dress the stone and sometimes to carve mouldings, capitals, or some of the simpler decorative stones. The hewer in the quarries could, therefore, learn something of the mason's craft by watching these men at their work, and in his leisure time he could practise what he learned with his own axe, chisel, or hammer on stones that had been cracked or spoiled in the quarrying. In such ways, by imitation and by practice, he could gain skill in the art of dressing and even of carving stone. But personal ambition, some instinctive native gift, some inward aspiring and driving will to learn were essential conditions of advancement. Then a day came when he would be taken from the quarries and sent to the site of the building operations to serve as a "famulus," a mason's helper, whose task it was to mix the mortar, carry the stones, or take the mason's tools to the workshop for repair or for sharpening. Here again he had the opportunity to learn by watching as the masons, the "cubitores" or "positores," laid the stones and mortared them in their places. At Vale Royal we find mason's helpers, famuli, receiving increased pay, a pay that rose from 12 pence a week to 16 and then to 18 pence, obviously because their increasing skill made them more valuable. William Warde, working as a famulus on London Bridge in 1419, received two shillings a week for three years, but in the fourth year we find the entry "Paid to William

Warde, famulus of said masons, because he works well as a sufficient mason, three shillings," and thereafter this was William's regular wage.

Finally, the famulus became an assistant to the "freemasons," who worked in the softer freestone which could be deeply undercut and so carved into the vines or foliage that framed the portals, into the mouldings or storied capitals, into the traceries of the windows, the gargoyles of the eaves, or the statues and bas-reliefs of the porches. He was now watching a master at his work, for the worker in freestone must not only be an artist, but also a most precise and careful workman when he carved such details as the tracery for a rose window, or the ribs and bars of a fan vaulting. He must also be an expert in setting what he carved for a little too much, or too little, mortar used in the setting of a great rose window might well distort the symmetry and spoil the entire work. That the mason's helper might learn, even in this highest and most difficult phase of the mason's craft, is indicated by the tale of one apprentice who drew the design of a complicated window before the eyes of his sorely troubled master, to the profit of the one and the relief of the other. It is also evidenced by many legends, such as that of the "'Prentice-pillar" at Rosslyn. Here, so runs the tale, the master, wishing to surpass all others in the beauty of his pillar, travelled even to Rome in search of inspiration. But in his absence his apprentice conceived and fashioned a pillar which so far exceeded in beauty the design of his master that the latter, in a fit of jealous rage, seized his hammer and beat out the young lad's brains.

So the boy from the farm, the pasture, or the village store, usually self-taught, advanced from the lower status of the rough quarryman, through all grades of the mason's craft, until the more gifted, industrious, and ambitious took his place beside the

mason-artist who wrought in freestone. Throughout the earlier years his way was open, no sharp lines of demarcation interfered with his promotion. But in the Sixteenth Century the Master-Masons, jealous of competition, began to guard their calling against intrusion from below and advancement became increasingly difficult, at least to the highest grades. The applicant had to carry out his appointed tasks in a locked room, under the constant surveillance of his critics. If he failed he might not try again for years; sometimes the failure was permanent. In some lands, in addition to the usual examinations, the candidate for a Master's licence was required to produce, or to have produced, a "masterpiece." The statutes of Regensburg, in 1514, apparently required him not merely to explain the making of a vaulted bay, a tower, or some other difficult phase of the builder's task, but actually to have raised the tower, constructed the vault, or built a curving ambulatory. If this rule was actually carried into effect there could have been few candidates for the Master's degree; not many applicants would have had opportunities in the past, or resources in the present, to meet the demands. Apart from this exacting demand, and whether he succeeded or failed in the usual examinations, he had to meet the additional expenses of high fees to the craft court, and of costly banquets to the Masters.

Yet the relations of Masters were comparatively exempt—neither apprenticeship, journeyman's training, nor the masterpiece was required, and the fees they had to pay were much lighter. Incredible though it may appear it is nevertheless said that Masters sometimes procured a mastership for their sons when they had barely reached their fourth year.

Even at the best of times the mason was a wage earner. The very nature of his trade, which must be plied on castles, churches,

city walls, or similar constructions—since the ordinary houses were of wood or clay—placed him at a disadvantage in comparison with the carpenter or the plasterer. These could open their own shops and make contracts for small buildings, but no mason could contract for a Carnarvon Castle, or for a cathedral like that of York. He might become owner of a small quarry and sell dressed building stone; in later years he might open a shop and sell images, mouldings, or carved capitals; he might be able to draw plans and elevations and sell his drawings, or he might become an inspector of other men's work. Perhaps the shop-work was most profitable. In 1419 Thomas Prentys and Robert Sutton, of Chelleston, "kervers" (carvers), contracted to design, carve, and set an alabaster tomb for the church of Lowick in Northants, for which they were to be paid forty English pounds. Nicholas Hill brought suit, in 1491, to enforce payment for fifty-six heads of John the Baptist; obviously he was dealing in wholesale with churches or cathedrals. A century later Richard Railey and his son Gabriel contracted to prepare and set a tomb at Somerton, but the purchasers were to provide cartage from the shop at Burton-on-Trent.

This shop-work, however, sometimes caused confusion, for the makers did not often set up their work. This was usually left to the local masons. But an alabaster tomb, for instance, was too large and too heavy to be shipped as a unit; the various parts were boxed, or barrelled, and arrived with all the complexity of a picture puzzle for the local masons to piece together. Some highly capable mason-artist carved a fine tomb for the church at Chelsworth, but the way in which the parts were fitted together, clumsily and inaccurately, evidences that the masons of Chelsworth were not equal to the task. In the Angel Choir of Lincoln the angels, if they came to life, would take strange

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Yet the relations of Masters were comparatively exempt—neither apprenticeship, journeyman's training, nor the masterpiece was required, and the fees they had to pay were much lighter. Incredible though it may appear it is nevertheless said that Masters sometimes procured a mastership for their sons when they had barely reached their fourth year.

Even at the best of times the mason was a wage earner. The very nature of his trade, which must be plied on castles, churches,

city walls, or similar constructions—since the ordinary houses were of wood or clay—placed him at a disadvantage in comparison with the carpenter or the plasterer. These could open their own shops and make contracts for small buildings, but no mason could contract for a Carnarvon Castle, or for a cathedral like that of York. He might become owner of a small quarry and sell dressed building stone; in later years he might open a shop and sell images, mouldings, or carved capitals; he might be able to draw plans and elevations and sell his drawings, or he might become an inspector of other men's work. Perhaps the shop-work was most profitable. In 1419 Thomas Prentys and Robert Sutton, of Chelleston, "kervers" (carvers), contracted to design, carve, and set an alabaster tomb for the church of Lowick in Northants, for which they were to be paid forty English pounds. Nicholas Hill brought suit, in 1491, to enforce payment for fifty-six heads of John the Baptist; obviously he was dealing in wholesale with churches or cathedrals. A century later Richard Railey and his son Gabriel contracted to prepare and set a tomb at Somerton, but the purchasers were to provide cartage from the shop at Burton-on-Trent.

This shop-work, however, sometimes caused confusion, for the makers did not often set up their work. This was usually left to the local masons. But an alabaster tomb, for instance, was too large and too heavy to be shipped as a unit; the various parts were boxed, or barrelled, and arrived with all the complexity of a picture puzzle for the local masons to piece together. Some highly capable mason-artist carved a fine tomb for the church at Chelsworth, but the way in which the parts were fitted together, clumsily and inaccurately, evidences that the masons of Chelsworth were not equal to the task. In the Angel Choir of Lincoln the angels, if they came to life, would take strange

flights, for the wrong wings have been fitted to their shoulders.

The errors were not always the fault of the town masons, however; the carver who, about 1330, cut the stone foliage for Bristol Cathedral gave the winged seed of the maple to the hawthorn and, in compensation, supplied may-blossoms to the maple. Sometimes these shop-keepers got into theological difficulties by reason of their work. In 1260 the Bishop of Tuy, in Spain, saw a crucifix whose feet, passed one over the other, had been fastened by a single nail. In bitter condemnation the bishop rebuked "with horror" the heretic who had attempted to destroy the faith, who "in derision of Christ's Cross had carved an image of Our Lord with one foot laid over another so that both are pierced with single nail, thus striving to annul, or to render doubtful, men's faith in the Holy Cross and in the traditions of the sainted fathers."

Nothing was done to this "heretic," probably because the artist was unknown or was beyond the reach of the Bishop of Tuy, but in 1306 a German artist was less fortunate. One Tideman had carved and sold a crucifix to a London rector for the enormous sum of 23 pounds (enough to have sustained five yeomen with their families for a full year). Just what it was in this crucifix that aroused the wrath of the Bishop of London is not clear; apparently it had something to do with the posture of the arms; but whatever it was it was enough to imperil the souls of the people, and the Bishop solemnly warned them so. That the Devil might be thwarted and Hell denied the rector had to surrender the image which, at the bishop's orders, was carried out in the darkness of the early morning or of the late evening, "when it might be done secretly and with least scandal," and ignominiously buried in unhallowed ground, while the artist was forced to disgorge the price he had received. In 1456



Jodocus Tauchen carved a really fine ciborium for the Church of S. Elizabeth in Breslau, but his fellow masons condemned him for "introducing new forms of ornament into his work"; evidently Jodocus was not sufficiently repentant to be obedient, for two years later he was boycotted, his fellow masons refusing to admit into their lodges any who had learned their craft from Jodocus, or to permit their own lodge members to work under his direction. This, moreover, was after the Black Death had smitten all Europe, laying a heavy toll on the masons; many died and new workmen had to be hurried through their training, for there was work to be done that might not be delayed. Such carvings as flowers, fruits, and foliage were therefore conventionalized, cuttings became more shallow, originality in design diminished, and patterns were adopted that the less skilled workmen could follow satisfactorily. All this, however, was a matter of late development; in earlier years the mason was a wage earner as long as he lived, but he was usually possessed of some outside source of revenue. Often he owned a small farm which he tilled when not engaged in his craft; sometimes he was the owner of a small ship, a brewer of beer, or a country tavern-keeper, but whatever his secondary occupation it must be one that his wife or family could carry on in his absence.

Wherever important work was in progress a "lodge" was built—a long, one-storied building, sometimes divided into compartments and occasionally provided with a loft. Here the masons dressed or carved the stones, and here they took their noon siesta, for which period an hour was expected and allowed. Here, too, the tools were kept; for the mason, as a rule, did not own his own tools and such as he brought with him were commonly bought by his employers. These also paid for the repair and the sharpening of axes, chisels, and points. Here, too, took place a

curious ceremony when some wandering mason knocked at the door and applied for work. Since he could have no credentials, and since some way must be determined whereby the master-mason could know that the applicant was competent at his trade and not a wandering tramp who wished to collect a day's pay even though he spoiled the stones, the lodge where he had completed his training taught him a password and a grip. Statutes of 1462 describe a ceremony, doubtless far older than this written record, wherein "every apprentice, when he has served his time, shall promise to the craft by troth and honour, and on pain of losing his craft as a mason, that he will disclose to no man the greeting or the handshake of a mason." Equipped, then, with the secret signs of an accredited mason the applicant knocked thrice at the door of the lodge with his staff, opened and entered, saying, "Do masons work here?" Without waiting for answer he went out and closed the door. All the masons of the lodge thereupon laid aside their aprons and their tools, put on their jackets, covered their heads and left the workshop. Then one of them came to the door, chisel in hand, to bid the stranger welcome; the latter, grasping his hand, leaned over and whispered in his ear, "God greet the honourable mason," to which the mason replied, "God thank the honourable mason." Stranger: "The honourable master [so and so] of [such a place], his warden and the pious and honourable masons send greetings to you and to your honour." Mason: "Thanks to your honourable master [so and so], to his warden, and to his pious and honourable masons."

The ceremony of the grip and the password being thus exchanged, the stranger was brought into the lodge and presented to the reassembled company. This ceremony is of late date (1563)

but Gould, quoted by Coulton in his appendix, says that in very early times the master, if he could not offer work, sent the applicant on to other building operations in the same town. If no work offered he was given a night's lodging, with dinner and breakfast, and a small sum of money to carry him on to the next town. Later, instead of being received in the master's house, he was sent to a tavern which thus became a bureau of information where the wandering mason might expect to learn of opportunities to ply his trade. Still later, when masons' fraternities were established, these became places of meeting and someone was deputed to call each day to bid strangers welcome, to provide them with work if possible, or at least with entertainment for the night and with money in their purse to speed them on their way when day should dawn. Thus a mason could travel from end to end of Germany without expense and yet without receiving charity. What he received when out of work he cheerfully gave to others when work was found.

Every man in the lodge worked under certain rules; good work was expected and enforced. According to Jenner the stone that a workman had spoiled was placed upon a bier. Work stopped, a procession was formed and the stone, with the guilty workman marching behind the bier as chief mourner, was carried to the place of burial, called the "charnel-house," and there interred. But lest this punishment of shame should not be sufficient the careless workman had to submit to blows from his fellows when he returned to the lodge.

The "mason's mark" also became a means of regulating both the quantity and the quality of the workmanship. At first each mason was required to mark his stones that at the end of the week, when pay day came, the paymasters might justly estimate

the amount of work each man had done, and know that he had honestly earned his wage. No man might place his mark upon a stone until it had received and passed inspection; if any master passed an imperfect stone he was fined 8 pence, while the worker lost 6 pence—the wages for two days. In Germany, in 1563, a statute ordained that no man “shall change, of his own will and power, the mark [literally “the sign of honour”] which hath been conveyed and granted to him by his gild. If he purposeth to change it, let him do so with the favour, knowledge, and consent of the whole gild.”

Thus the mason's mark, once imposed upon him as a check upon his work, became “the sign of honour” in which he could take pride. Other marks were used to assure the correct placing of the stones. At Notre-Dame in Paris some of the statues of the porch were wrongly placed, thus reversing the order and confusing the significance intended by the builders. To guard against such errors the masons of Rheims indicated by marks just where a statue should be placed. A crescent showed that this statue was intended for the north side of the great central portal; one straight line indicated that the statue should be placed nearest the entrance, two straight lines marked that which should come next, and so each of the five statues that lined that side of the porch was clearly indicated.

In some places, as at Ely, the masons' marks so cover the walls of the aisles that they seem almost to disfigure the stones, and one wonders why the clergy were indifferent to such defacements. But these marks were never expected to be seen, for the walls were covered with thick coats of lime in order to receive the frescoes of the painters; only in our day, when the protecting whitewash has been stripped off and the walls laid bare, have these old masons' marks come back to sight.



LEFT: Part of a Gothic window, Lyons Cathedral. In the left-hand medallion the kladrius, taking to himself the poison of the sick as Christ assumed the burden of man's sins. RIGHT: From Pottiers (Seventeenth Century). The Pious Pelican, symbolizing the Church—the Body of Christ—who feeds her young "from the bright artery of her proper breast."

Archives Photographique Paris





*Columbia Univ. Lib'y.*

#### SIGNED SCULPTURES OF THE MIDDLE AGES

ABOVE: Adoration of the Magi, from a capital at Chauvigny. Gofridus was the sculptor.  
 BELOW: Romanesque door from S. Étienne, Bourges, with (top to bottom) scenes from  
 beast fables; a hunt; the twelve months. "Giraldus made this door."

The hours of labour varied with the seasons of the year; in general they were from sunrise to sunset. In the London regulations of 1275 no hours are prescribed, but that they rose and fell with the sun is indicated by the pay; in summer the masons received fivepence, in autumn fourpence, in winter threepence, and in spring four. In 1370 the masons' ordinances gave the working hours from daylight till dark, with one hour for noon dinner, thirty minutes for sleep and thirty minutes for drinking. That would mean about nine hours for the five winter months and over twelve for the seven summer months. A statute of 1495 ordained that, from mid-March to mid-September, the mason should work from five A.M. till between seven and eight P.M., with half an hour for breakfast, and an hour and a half for noon dinner which included the siesta time. Despite all rules and regulations, however, labour troubles were not unknown. At the monastery of Schönaue, founded in 1142, the lay brethren, tired of receiving the cast-off shoes of the monks, struck for new boots of their own, and seem to have been successful. A few years later, however, another strike at the Abbey of Obazine, near Limoges, had a different ending. The masons, who had been hired in the market place and had not taken the Benedictine vows, grew tired of the monastic fare of pulse and herbs. Hungry for the forbidden meat they bought a pig, secretly roasted it in the forest, feasted royally and then hid the remnants for later consumption. Unfortunately the abbot, S. Stephen, discovered the hiding place between two barrels. As shocked by the discovery as the Jews were when Antiochus Epiphanes sacrificed a sow on the altar of the Temple in Jerusalem, the saint cast the abomination out upon the dunghill. Thereupon the masons threw down their tools and declared a strike. However, the abbot's threat to import strike-breakers worked upon their

consciences; according to his own account the strikers were "pricked to the heart" and resumed their work, doubtless with pleasant yet regretful recollections of the lost pig.

Another successful strike occurred at Bordeaux, in 1511, when the workers were digging a trench for the foundations of a flying buttress. The trench filled with water, making the task both dangerous and difficult, wherefore the workmen demanded higher wages before resuming work. Their demand was met, the pay being increased from twelve to fifteen liards—from seventy-five centimes to one franc twelve centimes.

Later, at Eton, we read of masons fined for "late cuming"—"he com late divers tyme." Difficulty arose also over the siesta hour and ten are fined for "keping the hole owr." Robert Goodgrome seems to have been a trouble maker; he was fined "for he wold keep his owris and not go to werk till the clock smyte"; nineteen are fined at the same time because "they wold not go to werke till ij of clock and al maketh Goodgrome." Other records show fines inflicted for "fiegthinge," for "telling of taylez and letting of his fellowes," "for he wille not do as he is bedyn," "for he wille not do labour buot as he listeth hymself." However, as a rule the masons were a serious lot, well ordered, amenable to discipline, and—according to their own description—"pious and honourable."

Their pay differed from generation to generation. In the Thirteenth Century the mason usually received threepence a day, a wage which would probably have today the purchasing power of two pounds or two pounds ten shillings a week. The master-mason of S. Louis (Louis IX) received four sols a day, equal to about one shilling sterling, but he also received one hundred sols a year for robes and maintenance. In 1250 the master-mason of S. Gilles was paid the equivalent of three pounds fifteen shill-



ings a year. Although wages rose steadily as the centuries passed, so also did the cost of living, and it is doubtful if the mason who received more than a shilling a day after 1600 was as well off as was his forebear who, in the Thirteenth Century, received his threepence. The mason also suffered from the competition of "bootleggers" in dressed stone, and sometimes the thefts imply almost incredible skill. In 1310 a royal warrant was issued for the arrest of certain thieves who had broken down a section of the city wall and carried away the stone. How this far-from-silent operation could have been carried out without arousing the citizens and alarming the watch is a mystery. But the incident does not stand alone; in 1290 Richard of Thorpe, canon of the abbey, pleaded mercy for buying dressed stone in full knowledge of the fact that it had been stolen from the town wall, and in 1344 York Minster likewise suffered thefts of stone, timber and lime. Many early churches or abbeys have disappeared so completely that it is difficult to trace their outlines, partly from the actions of later builders who received permission to use them as quarries, but also from the thefts of dealers in second-hand dressed stone which, as the story of Richard of Thorpe reveals, had ever a ready market.

Finally, what was the standing of the mason-artist, and how was he esteemed? Henry de Yevele, a contemporary of Chaucer, who once received a shilling a day as a mason, died possessed of two country manors and of several houses in London; Thomas Drawswerd, a carver of York, became Sheriff of his county and, in 1512, a member of Parliament; while the family of Bertie, which became the possessors of the two earldoms of Abingdon and of Lindsey, traced their descent from a mason who worked at Winchester. However, such instances are late and exceptional. In 750 the Cathedral of Freising owned a serf who was a skilled

metal worker. In 1100 "Wolmar the mason" was given to Castleacre Priory by the Earl of Warren, the gift implying that he must have been a serf; so too was Fulk to whom a house and an acre of vineyard was given by the Abbey of S. Aubin d'Angers for painting and glazing the abbey church. In 1146 "Aluric the mason and Lefwin the carpenter" were given to the monks of Peterborough. Even as late as 1475 a mason of Baden could seal no contracts because he was a serf of the Margrave. However, English statutes of the early Fifteenth Century required that all masons should be freemen.

But even when free the mason and the carpenter were the sons of farmers, of farm labourers, of artisans or of small town tradespeople. If admitted to the castle he sat, with the jester, "below the salt."

It is curious to remember, when visiting Siena, that some of the finest statues were the work of Corso di Bestiano, an excellent artist who also, by papal order, made stone seats for the garden of Pope Paul II. In 1470 "Master Paolo Mariani of Rome and Master Isaiah of Pisa sculptors" were set to the task of making stone cannon balls for the artillery of the same pope. Still more curious was the commission given the pope's favourite sculptor who fashioned two effigies, highly praised by Pope Pius for their excellency, of His Holiness' bitter enemy Sigismondo Malatesta; you will not find these images in Rome, however, for they were made to be burned publicly before S. Peter's, on or near the spot where S. Peter himself was crucified.

The Church herself held her mason-artists in low esteem. S. Anthony, Archbishop of Florence in 1448, echoes the judgment of Hugh of S. Victor in 1120. Masoncraft, together with medicine, navigation, and agriculture, belonged to the mechanical arts, "so called from the Latin word 'maechor,' to commit adul-

tery, for in them man's intellect is as it were adulterated, since it is created for the understanding of spiritual things, and in these mechanical arts it is occupied with material things." S. Anthony further tells us that according to the fourth chapter of Genesis, it was the sons of Cain who invented these ignoble arts and that these inventors, in the matter of morals, commonly imitated their guilty father. It was Cain who built the first city, whereby he declared that he had no lot in the heavenly Jerusalem. A hundred years later, however, the masons offered a different interpretation of this chapter of Genesis; it now appears that Jubal, son of Lamech, invented the masons' craft. "He was Cain's master-mason and governor of all his works when he made the city of Enoch, that was the first city that ever was made. Abraham also was a very wise man and a great clerk; he knew all the seven sciences and Euclid was his clerk and learned of him. It was Euclid who taught the princes of Egypt the craft of masonry, which he called geometry." Not content with tracing their ancestry to Lamech, Abraham, and Euclid, they added to the list Charles Martel of France and Athelstan of Saxon England. But despite his high pretensions the mason remained an artisan, with an artisan's standing and an artisan's pay.

If the Gothic artist and architect was lightly esteemed in his own day, so also was his handiwork by later generations. Writers of the classical age looked upon his art and architecture as something depraved, shocking to good taste and an offence to reason. Rousseau compared it to bad music which the ear cannot endure nor the mind justify, and Lenoir thought that a people who could produce Gothic architecture must have been plunged into the most frightful barbarism.

Yet we today cross wide and stormy seas to stand in wondering admiration in the aisles they built; we pass from York to

Canterbury, from Chartres to Bourges, from Palencia to Seville, finding, the best of us, no words wherewith we may adequately pay tribute to the glaziers who conceived and made the magnificent jewelled windows, or to the mason-artists who designed and cut the delicate traceries, the deep-set portals, the splendid carvings; who lifted the mighty vaults so high in air that we seem but pigmies in the aisles they built. Not before the great ones of the earth who lie buried here do we stand uncovered, but before Thomas Bates of Corby, before William Hindley, John Ford—with his oft-repeated counsel to younger masons, “Make it worthy, young man, make it worthy”—and before their fellow masons who wrought so splendidly for the glory of God, the inspiration of men—and for threepence a day in wages, perhaps the equivalent today of one dollar or four shillings.

G. G. COULTON, *Art and the Reformation*.

KNOOP and JONES, *The Mediæval Mason*.

## Part Three

### THE GOTHIC PERIOD



## Chapter Nine

### THE BACKGROUND OF GOTHIC ART

IT is difficult for us who live in a day when Latin is disappearing from our schools, Greek from our universities, and Hebrew from our theological seminaries, to realize the hold the classics had upon the students of the Middle Ages. Aucassin even thought well of Hell, since so many good scholars went there ("Car en enfer vont li beau clerc"). Small Gilbert of Nogent, his back scarred by the schoolmaster's rod, burst into tears when his compassionate mother suggested he should no longer attend so rigorous a school—"If I die for it I shan't stop till I get my learning and am clerk," he cried. Even Peter Damiani, Cardinal of Ostia, Legate to Germany, admitted that in his youth "Cicero was music in my ears; the songs of the poets beguiled me; the philosophers shone upon me with their golden phrases; the Sirens enchanted my soul wellnigh unto death. The Law and the Prophets, the Gospels and the Epistles, all the glorious speech of Christ and His servants, seemed poor and empty." "Think shame to yourself," cried Peter of Blois, "Lucan and Priscian, these be thy gods. See to it, for Death is at the door!" It was "death at the door" that silenced the eloquence of Vilgardus of Ravenna who esteemed the ancient poets—Virgil, Horace, and Juvenal—"in all things worthy of belief, even as Holy Writ," and was burned for so teaching.

"Death at the door"—the death of his favourite pupil—turned Serlon of Wilton from his brilliant but dissolute way when, walk-

ing in the Pré-aux-Clercs at night, he saw the tortured spirit of the dead. Roll after roll of parchments, heavy with the weight of the pagan learning the boy had received from Serlon's lips, hung round his neck; his face was seamed with pain, his brow was beaded with sweat, one drop of which, falling on Serlon's hand, burned it to the bone. The next day Serlon was missing and the University saw him no more; he had vanished into the monastery of La Charité-sur-Loire. But the Cluniacs could not hold him, their discipline was not sufficiently severe; so our last glimpse of the brilliant scholar is between the closing portals of the Cistercian abbey of L'Aumône.<sup>1</sup>

This conflict of conscience between the lures of classic wisdom and the austerities of Christian Theology runs from generation to generation throughout the mediæval period.

At the beginning of that period, in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries when the spirit of Monasticism was strong, the story of Vilgardus testifies that scholars might teach the Latin poets or the Greek philosophers only at their peril. At its end, when the Renaissance had almost paganized the Church, when Philosophy was strong and Theology was weak, Michelangelo, Raphael, and Titian numbered the Sibyls of Rome and the Philosophers of Greece with the Prophets of Israel, and the gods of Olympus were enthroned in the vault of a Christian church, where the monks of S. Savin had placed Christ in Judgment separating His sheep from the pagan goats.

<sup>1</sup> Cluny must have mellowed with the years for her early customs would seem to have been adequately austere. Long periods of silence were imposed upon the Order—a rule which led the brethren to learn to converse through gestures with results that were sometimes ingenious and amusing. For instance, if a brother wished a "good" book he asked for it by turning the leaves of an imagined manuscript, but if the work desired were secular—the poems of Virgil or the writings of Cicero—he made his request known by scratching himself as a dog does when fleas are troublesome. Cf. Helen Waddell, *The Wandering Scholars*, p. 80.



In the Gothic period the thirst for learning was just as keen; boys hungered to be "good clerks," to be well taught in the Latin tongue and in Greek thought. Paris was filled with poor students who crowded the garrets around the University, slept on straw that they bought for a penny in "Straw Street"—the rue de Fouarre—occupying one room with several others, and sharing a single academic gown which they wore in turn to their classes.<sup>2</sup>

However callow the years of youth both the students and their masters felt—as did the semi-pagans of the Renaissance—that the Greek philosophers, especially Aristotle and Plato whom most of them knew only in fragmentary translations, must be numbered with the great Doctors of the Church albeit they clad them in a different dress.

Because God was One and spoke with one voice, He could not contradict Himself. His revelation, whether given to the great poets and thinkers of the Classic world or silently proclaimed in the wonders of His Creation, must conform to the dominant Revelation of the Gospels as interpreted by the Church. Philosophy therefore—and the word included Mathematics, Dialectics, and the Natural Sciences—was bounded on every side by the creeds of the Church, the decrees of her Councils, the writings of the Fathers, and the encyclicals of the popes.

So conceived and qualified the study of God's world was, like Holy Writ, a sacred study; here day unto day uttered speech and night unto night showed knowledge. Even the primrose by the river's brim knew better than the greatest scholar the hidden

<sup>2</sup> Logic was a stern master, punishing severely the sin of an "undistributed middle." One student, returning home after five years of study in Paris, demonstrated to his parents by the irrefutable laws of Logic that the six eggs on the breakfast table were really twelve. The father, paying his son a really delicate compliment, thereupon ate the six eggs his hens had laid, leaving for the scholar those his Logic had produced. Cf. Helen Waddell, *The Wandering Scholars*, p. 113.

mysteries of God and Man. Therefore the Gothic artist found God manifest in bird, in plant and flower; he heard His voice speaking in all created things, and every shrub was a Burning Bush, lit by the flame of the Living God. And what the Gothic artist saw in woods or meadows he wrought upon his churches that He who had spoken in field or forest might also speak in stone or glass.

Here lies the salient difference between the Romanesque abbey and the Gothic cathedral, between the Eleventh Century monk and the Twelfth Century priest.

The one, viewing the world mainly from his cell, walking blindly when he went abroad, by lake or stream, listening for the voices of the Spirit as he told his beads but never to the voices of the spring, taught the faith to his generation by copying on his abbey walls the miniatures of his manuscripts.

The Gothic artists added to the tales told in the miniatures, in the Testaments, and in the Golden Legend the mysteries of God as He had revealed them in the six great creative days.

Something more, however, was needed, for although the artisan might be skilled, the architect bold and the artist brilliant, yet their visions without wealth to clothe them with reality were merely day-dreams—beautiful perhaps, but futile.

The architects and the artists of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries were fortunate in the opportunities these years offered them, for they lived at a time when commerce was pouring over all the roads and rivers, when population was increasing, cities multiplying, and when all Europe was entering upon a great church-building age.

Until their day Byzantium had been the dominant market, drawing the merchants of the world to her quays upon the Golden Horn. Now great fairs began to rise throughout all West-

ern Europe—along the Rhine, beside the Rhône, especially in Champagne and in Flanders. The buying power of these markets compelled a reversal in the tides of trade. Hitherto commerce had flowed through the Baltic Sea to the Gulf of Finland and to Novgorod near Lake Lodiga. Thence it had followed the old Varangian, or “Scandinavian,” route—opened by the Norsemen in the Ninth Century—down the Volga to Byzantium. Now these tides were suddenly reversed; commerce no longer sought the Golden Horn or the sacked and silent markets of Kieff. Merchants brought their wares—the luxuries of Asia, the lumber, honey, and the furs of Russia, especially the furs which the cold climates and unheated houses of Northern Europe made more of a necessity than a luxury—to Novgorod for transportation to the West. Nor was it only the trade that flowed through Russia that felt the new buying power of the Western fairs; all the traffic of the great Norse Empire, from Greenland to Gothland, instead of seeking the Varangian route as heretofore, now met the reversed and westbound stream of Russian and oriental commerce and, thus reinforced, poured as through a funnel into the ports of Germany, Flanders, or of France, thence flowing along new trade routes that crossed the continent from the North Sea to the Mediterranean. To this huge volume of commerce must be added that which sailed in the wake of the Crusaders’ ships, for when the Cross had displaced the Crescent in all Levantine ports; when, in the Fourth Crusade, the Western Christ, capturing Constantinople, had overthrown the Eastern Christ, a great commercial crescent was established which swung from the Black Sea to the delta of the Rhine.

Over that crescent great fleets brought the wealth of the South from Morocco, Algiers, Tunis, Lybia, Egypt, the ports of the

Red Sea and the eastern coasts of Africa; still other fleets, sailing far-eastern waters, brought the riches of India, China, Sumatra, and Ceylon to the Red Sea or the Persian Gulf, whence caravans bore them to Tyre or Sidon where the ships of Marseilles, of Genoa, or of Venice carried them to their own home ports. From Venice the tributes of the East were transferred from the holds of ships to the caravans which bore them over the Alpine passes to the markets of Burgundy or to river boats that took them up the Rhine to Flanders, while from Marseilles still other river boats carried them up the swift currents of the Rhône to the fairs of Avignon, of Beaucaire, Lyons, and Champagne. From Champagne the Loire carried them to Chinon or to Tours; the Saône to Chalons, and the Seine to Rouen. Countless other towns or cities received the commerce of the world from caravans that travelled the interlacing roads, or from cargoes that were borne along the marvellous network of rivers that enriched "the pleasant land of France."<sup>3</sup>

By the wealth thus created a great wave of church building swept over all Western Europe and cathedrals, abbeys and churches sprang from the ground on every hand. In France, whose population in 1338 was barely twelve million souls (and much less in the year 1200), the monks built more than sixteen hundred abbeys in the Eleventh, Twelfth, and Thirteenth Centuries, while the secular clergy erected their cathedrals and important churches at the rate of nearly six for every year between 1170 and 1270. In England, whose population was not over four million when the Hundred Years' War broke out, the people of the Middle Ages erected more than ten thousand churches.

Everywhere the story is the same; each church needed artists to fill the windows with coloured glass; to cover its walls with

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Sartell Prentice, *The Heritage of the Cathedral*, Chap. XVII, *passim*.

frescoes, its portals, porches, and capitals with carvings. And the artists, taught to see God everywhere, and to hear His Voice in everything, let the clover tell in stone the mystery of the Trinity; made the chestnut reveal the Incarnate Christ, while the red-breasted robin, whom they half hid amid the foliage of the vines that climbed around the portals, called on men to share the redemptive sufferings of Christ.

HELEN WADDELL, *The Wandering Scholars*, Chaps. III, IV, V, and VI.

ÉMILE MÂLE, Vol. II, Chaps. I and II.

## Chapter Ten

### THE CRYPTOGRAM OF GOD

THROUGHOUT the Eleventh Century the artists who dedicated their chisels to the glory of God and the decoration of His Church reproduced, in their carvings, the miniatures that had illumined the Apocalypse of S. Beatus of Liebana, the Bibles of Farfa or of Rosas, the Gospel of Rabula,\* the manuscript of Cosmas, or others of the countless evangels that passed from monastery to monastery. The Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries, however, led by the great Schoolmen, accepted the Universe as a cryptogram from the hand of God to whose inner meaning Symbolism was the key and drew, with that conception, a dividing line between the Romanesque and Gothic periods. The first surveyor's mark for that frontier line was drawn by Suger when he raised a great cross in his Abbey of S. Denis whose seventeen enamels bore scenes from the Old Testament which were paralleled with, and made prophetic of, the supreme moments in the redemptive mission of Jesus Christ.

The pathways into which Suger thus turned the art of the Church were new only because they were so old that they had been forgotten, so buried beneath the silences of four hundred neglectful years that they had faded from the memory of men; nevertheless the new symbolism of the Gothic era repeated, and expanded, the older symbolism of the catacombs. To the man

\* See Frontispiece. This, one of the earliest complete pictures of the Resurrection, was done at the Monastery of S. John at Zagba, Mesopotamia, in 586. The Gospel of Rabula is now in the Laurentian Library, Florence.



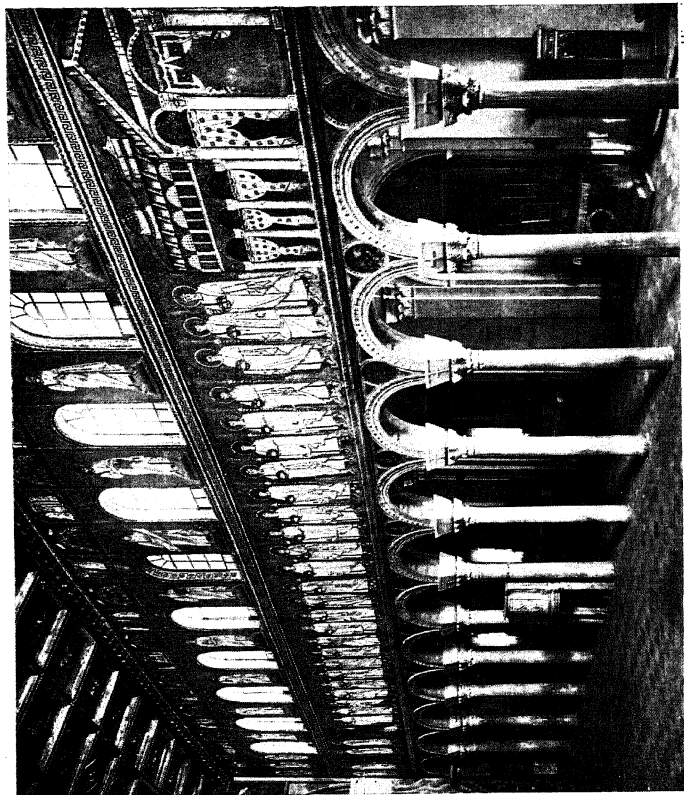
*Bochier*



*Columbia Univ. Lib'y.*

#### THE CHURCH IS NOT ALWAYS SERIOUS

ABOVE: Balaam and his ass (Twelfth Century). BELOW: Aristotle bridled and ridden by the vengeful courtesan Campaspe (Sixteenth Century). Two common subjects of the Church's art—the upper because even Balaam prophesied the coming of Christ; the lower because not even Philosophy protects a man against the dangerous power of womankind.



*Alinari*

# NAVE MOSAICS: S. APOLLINARE NUOVO, RAVENNA

Represented at right, the façade of Theodoric's palace, Saints march to the throne of Jesus. One would see, across the nave from them, virgins filing in procession to the throne of Mary. All wear the patrician costume of Justinian's Court (Sixth Century) where the palace ceremonial, inspired from Byzantium, was moulding rites and rituals throughout the churches of the Empire.



of the Twelfth Century, as to the Christians of the Second, the significance of the Old Testament lay in its foreshadowing of the New. Each event, each life, of the First Dispensation was selected because it was prophetic of that which, then hidden in the womb, should be brought to birth in the Second—when the Messiah came. If the artists portrayed on the Abbey of Cluny, and in the apse of S. Prassede in Rome, the four rivers of Paradise<sup>1</sup> it was to remind men—as did the earlier artists who decorated with mosaics the tomb of Galla Placidia in Ravenna—of the four great rivers of grace that flowed from the pens of the four evangelists.

Thus by showing men one thing the artists taught them a different, and spiritual, truth—when they introduced the figure of Melchizedek offering bread and wine to Abraham they reminded men of another High Priest and a greater King who had broken bread and poured out wine for His disciples in an upper chamber of Jerusalem. So the symbolism of the days of persecution overleaped the centuries to appear on the walls of Gothic churches. But while the art of early years was restricted to the hope and promise of man's deliverance from the grave, that of later centuries was expanded to cover the whole of life and saw God's redemptive care foretold in the lives and events of the Old Testament.

This mediæval point of view is, perhaps, best interpreted to us by a window of S. Denis where Jesus, standing between the Church and the Synagogue, crowns the one with His right hand and lifts a veil from the face of the other with His left. Beneath is written: "What Moses veiled, that Christ revealed."

Thus the history of Israel masked that of Christ; God had

<sup>1</sup> Genesis ii. 11.

ordained her pathways that, walking in His chosen ways, she might prefigure the "man of sorrows who was despised and rejected of men."

A harsher theme, of the Church crowned and the Synagogue



CHRIST, FLANKED BY THE CHURCH AND THE SYNAGOGUE

Medallion from a window, Chartres Cathedral, Thirteenth Century.

dethroned, was oftentimes repeated. The glaziers of Bourges placed Christ crucified in their windows; on His right stands the Church, crowned and holding a chalice in her hands with which she receives the mingled blood and water—symbols of

her two great sacraments—as they flow from the wounded side of Jesus.<sup>2</sup>

On the left of Jesus stands the Synagogue; her eyes are bandaged—at Paris they are sealed by the coils of the seducing serpent—the crown is falling from her head, and her staff is broken in her hands. The day of the Synagogue passed on Calvary and thereafter only the Church had favour with Almighty God. Evidently the artist had in mind the lament of Jeremiah:

“Woe unto us because we have sinned; our eyes are covered with shadows; our heart is sad, and the crown is fallen from our head.”<sup>3</sup>

In a window of Rouen, while Mary stands with the Church on the right of the cross, S. John stands on the left with the Synagogue and the sponge-bearer, whose sharp vinegar and bitter myrrh represent the Ancient Law turned acid and corrupt. The reasoning which aligned the beloved disciple with the Synagogue was drawn from one moment in his life. Early on the first Easter morning, when John and the less agile Peter came running to the sepulchre, John, although he outran Peter and came first to the tomb, halted at the entrance, thereby permitting the bolder, if slower, apostle to be the first to enter—a capital in the Museum of Toulouse shows Peter entering so impetuously that he has

<sup>2</sup> It is interesting to note that the heart of Jesus, pierced by the spear of Longinus, is placed on the *right* side of His body. This, although anatomically wrong, was theologically correct, for the wound must correspond with the opening made in the side of Adam when God brought forth the primal Mother of Mankind, since the Church was the new Eve created by the blood of Christ to lift again the human race. The very words of the prayer, “Ave Maria,” was thought to declare it, for “Ave” is only “Eva” reversed. To make this idea inescapable the artists introduced into the Crucifixion scene, as at Sens and Bourges, the Seraph whose flaming sword drove our first parents from their Paradise; he stands near the cross thrusting his sword back into its scabbard, for the new Adam has unbarred the road to the feet of men.

<sup>3</sup> Lamentations v. 16-17.

to seize a pillar to check his speed. So the Synagogue, although the first to receive the divine revelation, had hesitated when the Messiah came while the Church swept boldly on to receive the full glory of the new Gospel.

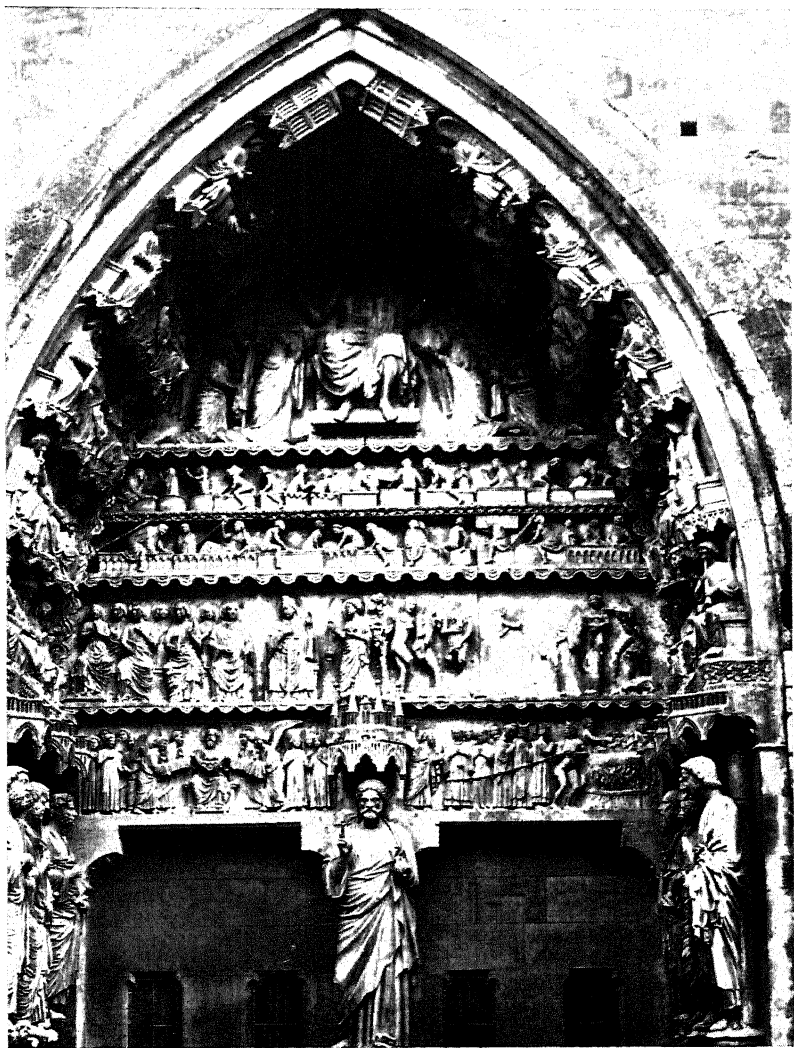
The Synagogue is again represented as ignorant and blind by the ass which carried the instruments for the sacrifice of Isaac up the slopes of Mt. Moriah.

When Elijah, driven from the country by the famine which punished the sins of the Jews, found shelter with a Gentile of Zarephath his act foretold that Jesus, rejected by the Synagogue, should find a refuge with the Church.

The story of the spies sent out by Moses was rich in symbolism. Those who, having surveyed the land of Canaan, sought to dissuade the Jews from going forward foreshadowed the Scribes and the Pharisees who should lead their people to refuse Christ and to chose Barabbas. The grapes the spies brought back, borne on the shoulders of two men, represented Jesus on the cross; the foremost bearer, because he turned his back upon the grapes, wears the conical cap of the Jews. The porter who marched behind, on the other hand, with the grapes always before his eyes, symbolized the Church who advances with her eyes ever fastened upon the Crucified.

The story of Joseph was often told; in a window at Bourges Joseph, dreaming, sees the sun, moon, and stars bowing down before him because he was the type of the Saviour whom the entire universe should adore. His brethren rage against him, strip him of his coat and sell him to the Ishmaelites, not so much for the twenty pieces of silver as to foreshadow the sins of another generation when other sons of Jacob should rage against the Christ and sell Him for thirty silver coins.

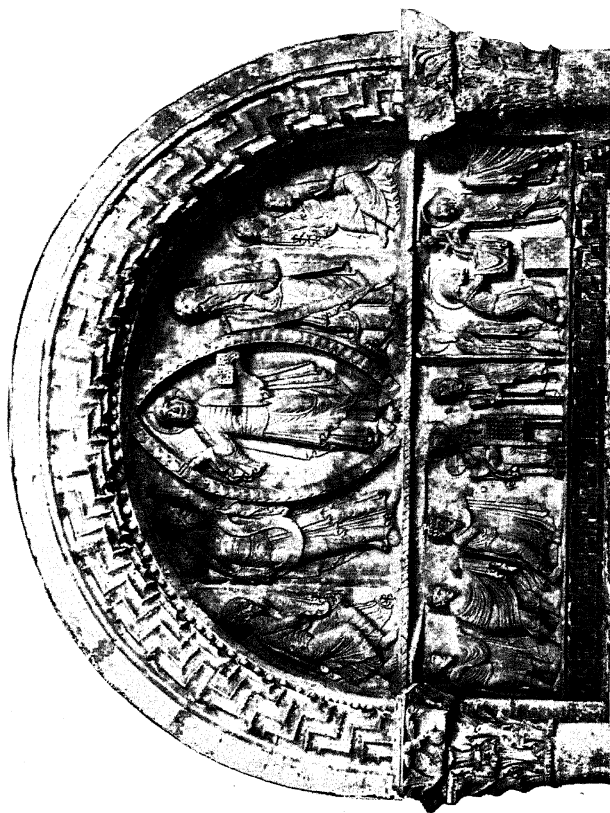
If Joseph was raised from his Egyptian dungeon and placed



*Archives Photographique—Paris*

#### THE LAST JUDGMENT: NORTH DOOR, RHEIMS

Beneath Christ enthroned in the apex are two bands showing the dead rising, some naked and some in shrouds, from their graves. Lower down, the scene of Judgment itself, with Michael holding the balance. At base, angels carry the souls of the Blessed Dead in napkins to lay them in Abraham's bosom on the one side, while the damned are led off to Hell on the other.



TYMPANUM: LA CHARITÉ-SUR-LOIRE

The Transfiguration above. Below, the Magi bring their gifts with veiled hands; Simeon veils his as he receives the infant Jesus. Thus, made known to the Western world through manuscripts and ivory carvings, Byzantine court etiquette lived on in medieval iconography.

at the right hand of Pharaoh it was less for his own sake than to foretell the resurrection and exaltation of the Christ. If Potiphar's wife seeks to tempt him it is because the Synagogue, accustomed to adultery with false gods, would attempt to seduce Jesus who escaped from her hands leaving His body, represented by the mantle, in her grasp.

The Hebrews, slaves in Egypt, marked the lintels of their homes with the Greek letter Tau (T)—the accepted symbol of the cross—not only that the angel of Death might pass them by, but more because they were prophets of the salvation of all believers through the cross of Christ.

Since that letter, Tau, also stood for the number 300, therefore when Gideon chose three hundred men for battle with the Midianites he was pledging to all ages victory through a crucified Saviour.

The woman of Zarephath, gathering sticks which form the emblem of the cross in her hands that she might make a fire for the baking of a cake "for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die," foretold an endless life for men through the power of the cross.

This re-born symbolism of the Gothic centuries, introduced by Suger at S. Denis, owes much to the encyclopædic work of Vincent of Beauvais, to the sermons and writings of Honorius of Autun, and to their fellow theologians, who not only saw the New Testament foreshadowed in the Old, but who also saw the revelations of God expressed in all His handiwork so that the world in all its parts was a vast book, written by the hand of the Almighty, wherein every fact, every life, every animal contained a secret meaning through the understanding of which man rose to a comprehension of the thoughts of God.

If the dove has two wings it is because man needs the double

pinions of spiritual meditation and of Christian action to rise above the things of earth; the iridescent, changing colours of its breast bespeak the fickle passions of the world; its eyes are yellow, the colour of ripe grain, because the Church looks out upon the world with the mature wisdom of long experience, and its feet are red because the Church has advanced through the bloody paths of many persecutions.

If the rose is red, it is to symbolize the sacrifices of the martyrs; if it is white, it is to remind us of the supreme virtue of the virgin life; if it rises above thorns, it is because the Church also rises above the seductions of all heresies and the violences of all enemies. The changing seasons portray the life of man: the warm summer, when his care provides the growing crops, reminds him that he must work out his salvation for the time cometh when man works no more; the autumn, when the leaves fall from the trees, the ripe grain is harvested, and the weeds are burned, foretells the Judgment; the winter prophesies his death, and the spring his resurrection. So to Vincent of Beauvais and to Honorius of Autun the whole earth was full of the glory of God and of his messages to the minds and hearts of men. Even the beasts of the fields and the birds of the air, some real and others fabulous, were spokesmen for the Most High.

In a window of the Cathedral of Lyons the medallions portray successively the Annunciation, the Crucifixion, the Resurrection, and the Ascension. In the border each of these subjects is accompanied by its appropriate symbol. The scene of the Annunciation is conjoined with that of a young girl mounted on a unicorn. Honorius tells us that the unicorn is so savage that only a virgin may capture it, for the beast comes quietly when he sees her, lays his head on her breast and there, quiescent, allows himself to be taken by the hunters. The unicorn is Christ,



the horn on his brow is the invincible might of the Son of God who entered the womb of the Virgin and so surrendered Himself to those who sought Him.

The fleece of Gideon flanks the second medallion as an image of the Incarnation for the dew fell only on the fleece, leaving the ground around it dry, in order to proclaim that the dew of the Holy Spirit should descend upon Mary alone among all women.

The whale of Jonah and the lion standing over its cubs, born dead but vitalized on the third day by its breath, appear beside the scene of the Resurrection; while the Ascension scene is accompanied by the eagle who, alone among the birds, could mount and look with steady gaze upon the sun. Furthermore, in teaching its young to fly, the eagle was said to fly beneath them, bearing them upon its own strong pinions when their feeble wings failed. Even so we, when fear or failure threaten, are upheld on the strong arms of Christ's holy cross.

Another curious window of Lyons tells the story of the *kladrius*. This bird, according to the legend, could foresee the issue of any malady. Perching upon the breast of the sick he turned away his eyes, refusing to look the patient in the face, if death must be the end. If, however, sentence had not yet been determined the bird thrust his beak towards the sick man's mouth, absorbed the poison of his illness into his own body, and then flew high into the rays of the sun where the poison passed from him in a kind of sweat. So Christ came to a sick earth; turning his face away from the Jews whom He left to the penalty of death, He drew near to those who trust in Him, and carried our mortal illness in His own body on the cross; the poison that was killing us flowed from His wounds; then, His mission ac-

complished, He rose to the presence of the Father to complete, as our Intercessor, the victory He had won as our Redeemer.

At Amiens the artist has carved the basilisk—half cock, half dragon—whose poison kills, whose touch makes sterile any tree. The basilisk, however, may himself be killed by his own venom if he who is threatened holds a mirror before the monster, for the glass throws back the poison with the likeness reflected in the crystal. So Satan, poisoner of mankind, was slain when God placed His Son in a vessel of pure crystal—the Virgin—for when Satan saw her he lost all power to injure men.

The phoenix who, after five hundred years of life, mounts to the sun to bring down fire wherewith to consume its nest and itself only to rise again in new vigour on the third day, is obviously a symbol of the Christ; so too is "the Pious Pelican" who is often represented tearing its breast with its beak to nourish its young with the blood that comes pouring from its veins, as Christ nourishes us with the blood that flows into the chalice from His wounds. So one by one the animals that figure in the carvings, with their subtle values and symbolic meanings, join the choir of all created things to declare the purposes of God.

This symbolism penetrated the very mathematics of the universe. The number three has an esoteric meaning, because that is the number of the Trinity; four, because there are four elements—earth, air, fire, and water. The two, added together, express the union of the spiritual and material in man, and, when multiplied, symbolize the Church which was established by twelve apostles. Three, four, seven, and twelve constantly appear as directive agents in the lives of men. Human life is divided into seven ages; to each age there belong seven virtues, and man obtains grace for the practice of these virtues by addressing to God the seven petitions of the Lord's Prayer, while the seven

sacraments guard him from the seven deadly sins. When God took seven days for His Creation He gave men a key to His mysteries, wherefore the Church sings His praises seven times each day.

The Wise and Foolish Virgins were five in number, for there are five senses of the soul and five forms of carnal desire—the joys of the five physical senses which make men forgetful of the five satisfactions of the spirit.

The Ark of Noah prefigured the Saviour for it was six times as long as it was broad, and these are the perfect proportions for a man.

If David plays upon an instrument of ten strings it is to keep before our minds the ten commandments given Moses on Mt. Sinai; if he took five stones from the brook when he went against Goliath it is because God revealed His law in the five books of Moses; while the one stone with which he slew the Philistine represents the one Law of love which fulfils both the Law and the Prophets. The importance attached to the number twelve is curiously illustrated by an incident of the Crusades, for when Godfrey de Bouillon, with twelve knights, made a sally against the Saracens, they rode into battle encouraged by the thought that their numbers were those of the twelve disciples with their Leader; and the tyranny of the number three is evidenced at the Abbey of S. Riquier in Picardy, which had the three sides of a triangle, three churches in honour of the Trinity, and three hundred monks who taught their pupils in three schools.\*

\* Louis Bréhier, *L'Art Chrétien*, p. 199. Mr. G. G. Coulton (*Art and the Reformation*, p. 252), on the other hand, thinks that this abbey would have had the form of a quadrangle had it not been for the interference of a river. As it was, it appeared more like an irregular trapezoid quadrangle than like a triangle. He quotes Schnaase: "Symbolism had little influence even here, or at most a very subordinate influence. It was

Thus to mediæval man the Temporal bore the imprint of the Eternal, and the Invisible was inscribed upon the Visible. The word of the Lord which came to Moses from the Burning Bush, to Samuel at Shiloh when the lights burned low, and to Ezekiel by the waters of Chebar, spoke to him from the common things of earth: its fruits and flowers, its growing grain, the beasts of forest or of field, the birds of the air, and the changing seasons, even by the numbers the children learned in school.

probably an afterthought of the pious abbot [Abbot Angilbert] to bring in an allusion to the Trinity."

Nevertheless the fact that Angilbert (a friend of Alcuin and an intimate of Charlemagne, and who died at S. Riquier when the great Charles was dying at Aachen) could read the mystic virtues of the number three into the structure of his abbey has a significance which is quite independent of the actual form of S. Riquier, whether that was an imperfect trapezoid or an irregular triangle.

LOUIS BRÉHIER, *L'Art Chrétien*, Chap. VII.

ÉMILE MÂLE, Vol. I, Chaps. I and IV; Vol. II, Book IV, Chaps. I, II, and VI, Book III, Chap. V.

## Chapter Eleven

### THE CALENDAR IN THE CARVING

THE twenty-second chapter of Genesis tells us that Abraham, divinely ordered to sacrifice his son, journeyed three days to Mt. Moriah, thereby unwittingly declaring that the great mission of the Jews should be accomplished in three stages—the first from Abraham to Moses; the second from Moses to the Baptist, and the third from John to Jesus.

The cathedral also declares that there are three periods of divine revelation but the coming of Christ created a new order; the first period became that of the Old Testament; the second that of the New, and the third that of the Church.

From the days of the patriarchs through those of the prophets men lived in a world of shadows which was illumined by the promise of redemption, foreshadowed by the very vicissitudes of their lives, through a Messiah whom God should send.

In the days of Jesus, and by Jesus Himself, that promise was fulfilled; the seductive serpent lies, crushed and writhing, beneath the cross from which Christ descends to overthrow the gates of Hell and bring forth the saints of old. This last victory won, He rises to the throne of God leaving to men the Church, His *gérant* and successor upon earth, by whose counsels they may rule, govern, and direct their lives. Thus all periods of history receive their values from that which is dominated by the Son of God; without Him all history—past, present, or future—would be meaningless.

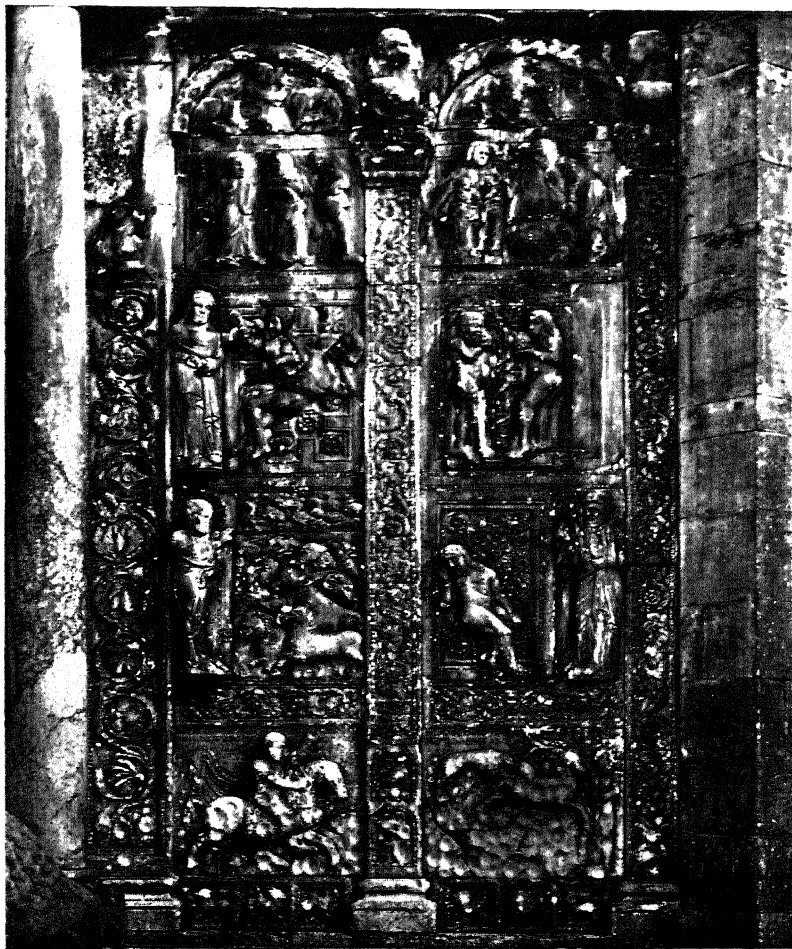
Nevertheless, supremely significant as the figure of Jesus may be, the Church does not attempt to give His full life story; in fact the events of that life which she omits often appear more important than those which she relates. For instance, the miracles of Christ are rarely represented although those of the Virgin and the saints are multiplied. Again His public teaching, the calling of the disciples, the dinner with the Pharisee, his compassion on, and preaching to, the multitudes by the Sea of Galilee, all these with many other scenes that have inspired other artists have left no imprint on the Church.

Of the three great divisions of Christ's life—infancy, Ministry, and Passion—only the first and the last are consistently represented. All the rich variety of His life's work is restricted to just four scenes—the Baptism, the Temptation, the Wedding Feast at Cana, and the Transfiguration—and even these are rarely brought together. If other scenes from the life of Jesus appear it is to illustrate some other character—the Virgin, S. Peter, S. Thomas, or S. John.

The reasons which determined the selections, or the omissions, of the artists lay in the necessities imposed upon them by the ecclesiastical calendar, for the Church demanded of her sculptors, glaziers, and painters such subjects as should illustrate the events which were celebrated in the Feasts and Festivals of her liturgical year.

The Nativity and the Announcement of the angels to the shepherds often appear in stone or glass, for these were celebrated at the midnight Mass on Christmas, and at the Eucharist which was given at dawn.

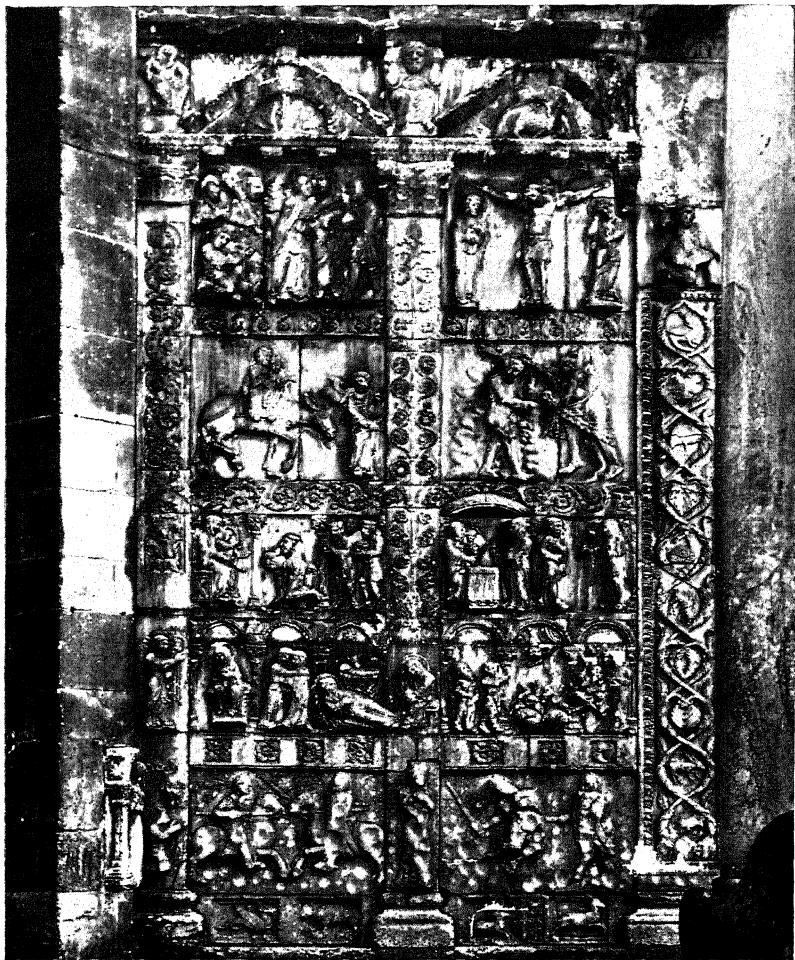
Almost immediately after this the Church commemorated the Massacre of the Innocents together with the Feasts of S. Stephen



THE GENESIS STORY: PORCH OF S. ZENO, VERONA

*Alinari*

Reading from left to right upward, above the hunting scene: The creation of animals, of Adam. The creation of Eve; Adam eats of the tree. Adam and Eve, ashamed, expelled from Eden; fully clothed, Adam tills the ground, Eve holds Cain and Abel. (Twelfth Century.)



THE GOSPEL STORY: PORCH OF S. ZENO, VERONA

*Alinari*

Balances the Genesis story across the porch (see overleaf). Reading from left to right upward, above the battle scene: The Annunciation, the Nativity. The adoration of the Magi, the presentation in the Temple. The flight into Egypt, the Baptism. The betrayal of Jesus, the Crucifixion.



and S. John in order to unite the memory of the babes of Bethlehem, first to die for the sake of Christ; the proto-martyr Stephen, first to perish for the faith; and John who, laying his head on Jesus' breast, symbolized thereby the ultimate reward of those who "through faith had wrought righteousness, and out of weakness had been made strong."

In February came the Feast of the Presentation in the Temple, reminding men that He who gave the New Law had Himself first submitted to the Old.

The Adoration of the Magi, the Baptism, and the Wedding at Cana were celebrated on Theophany Sunday—a term that later yielded to Epiphany—because they were linked together by one central idea. First among the Gentiles the Magi had confessed Jesus; thirty years later, on the same day and date, a voice from Heaven proclaimed that divinity which Jesus himself asserted, just one year later (according to mediæval chronology), by His first miracle at Cana of Galilee.

Two more scenes, those of the Temptation and the Transfiguration, complete the cathedral's record of Christ's public life. The first was presented because it symbolized that battle with evil which is the universal lot, and the second because it promised victory. In the persons of Moses and Elias, who had each endured the pangs of forty days of fasting, every Christian saw the assurance of his own transfiguration if he kept the faith.

With these scenes the representations of Christ's public ministry end and we pass to those of the Passion—the entry into Jerusalem, celebrated on Palm Sunday; the Last Supper and then, in fine detail, all the succeeding events from Gethsemane to the judgment seat of Pilate, to Calvary, the empty sepulchre, and the Ascension. Here the iconography usually halts, but there are exceptions. The reliefs on the choir screen of Notre-Dame in

Paris, for instance, show the appearances of the risen Jesus to the women, to two disciples on the road to Emmaus, to S. Thomas the Doubter, and at the Sea of Galilee.

Some of these scenes concealed a theologic value, for the Church—when portraying the death of Christ—wished men to remember that He was the new Adam who had destroyed death, atoned for the primal sin, and freed the race from the consequences of Adam's fall.

She also wished her children to know that the Crucifixion, abolishing the Synagogue, had given authority and divine commission to the Church. It was on the very spot where God had fashioned Adam from the primeval clay that Mary was seated when the angel announced to her "a holy thing shall be born of thee which shall be called the Son of God."

The cross on which Jesus had died had not been made of ordinary wood; it had been hewn from that Tree of Knowledge whose tempting fruit had ruined the entire world; the fatal tree of Paradise now bore a new fruit whereof man might freely take and live, thus making the promise of the Serpent, "If ye eat thereof ye shall not die"—once a lie from the Father of Lies—a vital and eternal truth.

Moreover, that cross was raised above the grave of Adam so that the blood which streamed from the wounds of Jesus, filtering into the ground, touched with saving power the bones of him "in whose Fall we sinnèd all," as the old New England Primer reminded our grandparents. To complete the parallel the Crucifixion took place on Friday, the same day of the week whereon the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and Jesus died

at three o'clock in the afternoon, the precise hour when Adam committed his mortal sin.

Finally the Church, standing at the right of the cross, receives all power to loose or bind, in Heaven as on earth, with the mingled blood and water that flows into her chalice from the wound made by Longinus' spear; while the Synagogue on the left, her eyes bandaged, her staff broken, and her crown falling from her head, vanishes forever from the purposes of God.

When we turn from the acts of Jesus to His words we find the presentations of His teachings quite as rare as are those of His miracles. Of all the parables the Church apparently knows only four: the Good Samaritan, the Wise and Foolish Virgins; the Prodigal Son, and Dives and Lazarus.

The story of Dives was probably intended merely to stimulate the charity of the prosperous towards the poor, as is indicated by its representation in such places as the porch of Moissac and the transept portal of S. Sernin at Toulouse—that is, where the needy came to solicit alms. When the fortunate entered the church they saw, above the heads of the beggars with their outstretched palms, Lazarus the poor amid the joys of Paradise while in Dives, once prosperous and proud, they saw their own hard-hearted selves dragged down to Hell by exultant devils, their useless purses dangling around their necks, if they refused the opportunities presented by the mendicant's pleading hands.

The story of the Prodigal Son, with its dramatic revelation of the Father's patience, compassion, and abiding love, was very popular and appears at Bourges, Sens, Chartres, Poitiers, Auxerre, and in many other cathedrals or churches.

The parable of the Good Samaritan carries many a lesson; the traveller from Jerusalem to Jericho represents the whole human

race which, because of Adam's sin, had forfeited Paradise—often symbolized by Jerusalem—and been compelled to take the road to Jericho whose name, in Hebrew, means "the Moon" which, now bright, now black, with its fadings and eclipses, aptly portrays the life of man stumbling and sinning along his earthly road.<sup>1</sup> This man is attacked by robbers—his sins—who take away his garment of immortality. Then the ancient Law of Moses passes by in the persons of the Priest and the Levite who, looking with indifference upon the stripped and wounded man, continue on their way. Finally one comes down the same road whose race-name, "Samaritan"—in Hebrew a "guardian"—brings before us the person of Jesus Christ. This "guardian" halts, dresses the wounds that Moses could not bind and then carries the victim to the inn, that is to the Church, where he may be made whole.

The parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins also has its hidden meaning for as the virgins all sleep, so shall the human race long sleep in death awakening only as the trumpet sounds to announce the Second Coming of Christ, this time in Judgment. Then the wise virgins rise and follow the Bridegroom into His House, but the doors close sharply behind them, shutting out the foolish virgins and all those in whom carnal delights have extinguished the flames of their spiritual powers. So taught the Church, and so the artists warned the living who were soon to become the dead.

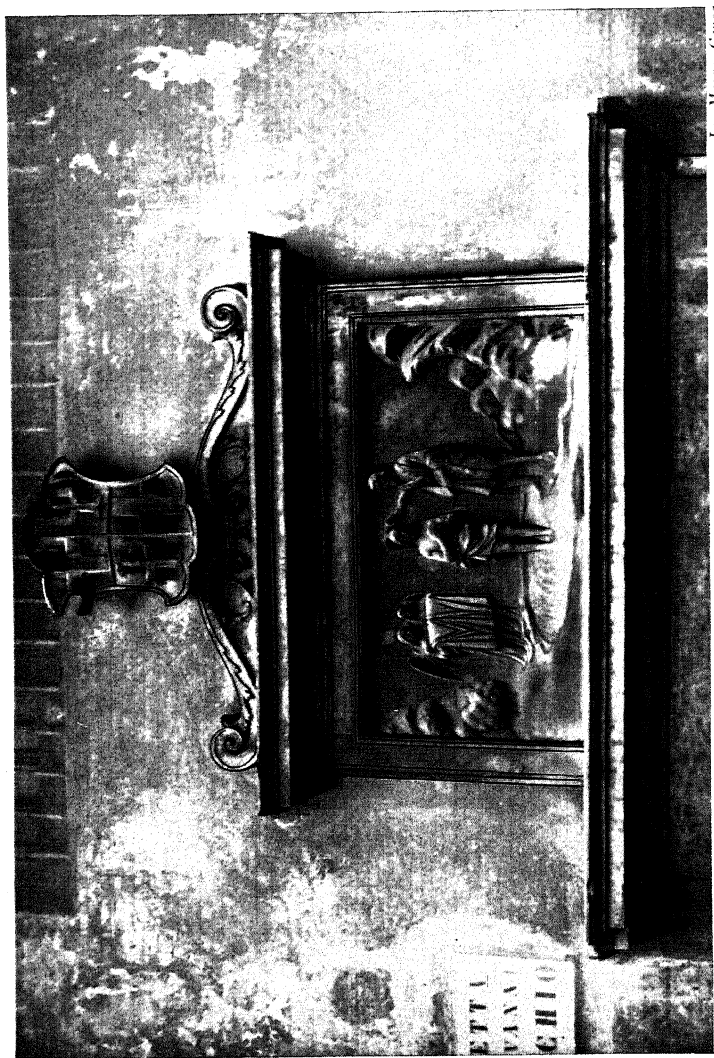
While carving on her stones the things that belonged to the present, in the succession of her yearly Feasts, the Church also scanned the eternity of God. Her eyes looked backward to that

<sup>1</sup> The Thirteenth Century erred in deriving "Jericho" from the Hebrew "Raach"—"the Moon"; it probably comes from "Ruach"—"fragrance."



# THE HOLY CHILD: LA CHARTRE-SUR-LOIRE

Mary "Theotokos"; the Mother of God enthroned, represented in Twelfth Century France according to the decree of the Council of Ephesus (431) that she might serve the Holy Child with unveiled hands. Below, scenes from the infancy of Jesus.



*Ivo Mezzo, Genoa*

#### THE BAPTISM: S. LORENZO, GENOA

The Byzantine influence lives on into the early Renaissance. Here again, as in the Twelfth Century, the attendant angels veil their hands at the Baptism—but functionally not ceremonially. They are holding the garments which Jesus has cast aside.

far day when the earth was without form and void; when the heavens knew neither sun, nor moon, nor star, and when the Spirit of God first moved upon the waters to prepare a place for the immortal drama of human life. With equal clarity of vision she looked into the future, to the day that should herald the coming of Christ. In that prophetic hour the heavens shall be rolled up as a scroll, the sun shall be darkened, the moon shall become as blood, and the stars shall fall from their set places even as a fig tree casteth her untimely fruit when it is shaken by a mighty wind. Therefore over her western portals, illumined by the rays of setting suns, the Church revealed the secrets of that dread day when both earth and sea shall give up their dead that all men, small or great, may appear before a Christ who sits in glory to judge the souls of men.

It shall be early in a morning known only to omniscient God, at the very hour when Jesus rose from the grave, that the first faint gleams of light shall usher in life's last day. Then the archangel shall sound his summons and the dead, hearing the compelling call, shall throw off their gravestones and rise to take their places in the great Assize. They are all naked, for "we brought nothing into this world and it is certain we can carry nothing out"; naked we came and naked we shall go, and so the Church presents us at the Judgment Seat of God.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> At Bâle the dead hurry into their attire, fastening their shoes, pulling up their long stockings, and putting on their garments that they may appear in decent and respectful garb before the great Assize. At Notre-Dame in Paris they are fully dressed but this tympanum, in its present form, was carved long after the Middle Ages had passed. However, some figures from an early portal, now in the Cluny Museum, are clothed—an exceptional instance. Cf. Mâle, Vol. II, p. 378, note.

On the Arch of Constantine in Rome, Augustus is represented in the act of distributing rewards or penalties to those who stand on his right hand or his left, a scene which may well have influenced the mediæval artists in their portrayals of the Last Day.

Not only shall the earth and the sea give up their dead but the beasts of the wilds, the birds of the air, and the monsters of the deep shall hear and obey the summons. An illustration in Herrad's *Hortus deliciarum* shows an angel rolling up the sun,



THE DEAD DRESSING FOR THE LAST JUDGMENT

A carved detail from the north portal, Bâle Cathedral. (From G. G. Coulton, *Art and the Reformation*.)

the moon and the stars of heaven on a long scroll as wolves, lions, bears, vultures or eagles, together with the leviathans of the sea cast at his feet the bodies of those whom they have devoured—a foot, a hand, the head, legs, sometimes the whole body. Whatever the disasters of our lives we shall come back to God at last with all our members—except of course Adam, who has permanently lost a rib.

Beneath the throne S. Michael stands, holding the scales



wherein our sins shall be weighed, not against our virtues, thank God, but against our faith and the merits of the Saviour. On the one side a hideous head in the balance represents the evil counsels that the soul has, alas! perhaps too often followed. On the other side a little figure with hands joined in prayer (Chartres) looks up to the throne of Him who "while we were yet sinners



THE BEASTS GIVE UP THEIR DEAD

From a manuscript miniature in Harrad's *Hortus Deliciarum*. The motif is probably Byzantine in origin. (From G. G. Coulton, *Art and the Reformation*.)

loved us." At Amiens the beast in us is weighed against the Lamb of God, and at Bourges the chalice, perhaps the Holy Grail itself, takes our place in the balances of Judgment. Dark indeed must his life have been whose sins outweigh such advocates!

Once more Satan appears in Heaven, for he has the right to plead the cause of Hell but, being the Author and Father of Lies, he cannot resist the desire to cheat by giving the balance a sly touch of hand or foot, or by sending a crab to cling to the bottom of the scales. But the scales will give no false verdict—except for Mary whose kindly purpose, womanly mercy, and

greater skill sometimes outmanœuvre S. Michael as well as Satan.

So the Church, by her calendars and her carvings, in her feasts and in her glass, tells the story of Time and of Eternity, from man's creation to his consummation, from his lost earthly Eden to his gained celestial Paradise.

CHARLES DALTON, *Byzantine Art and Archaeology*.

G. G. COULTON, *Art and the Reformation*, Chap. XIII.

ÉMILE MÂLE, Vol. I, Chap. VII; Vol. II, Book IV, Chaps. I, II, and VI, Book III, Chap. V.

## Chapter Twelve

### VISITING OUR ANCESTORS

IN and out of the ordered pattern of the Church's iconography, careless of the confusions they create in warp and woof, many threads run wild, following their own will and way and charming us by the very insouciance of their rebellion. They show us man's daily toil in shop or field; they bring before us the costumes and the customs of his palace or his hovel; they repeat his household saws and homely proverbs, while their rough jests and loud laughter permit us to measure the mentalities of our fathers by the qualities of their amusements. These little unexpected scenes that flash so irresponsibly before us, that bear no relation to the serious purposes and messages of the Church but leap spontaneously often from the whimsically humorous, bring centuries that were only dates very near to us, and make vivid, real, and human the lives of men who, at the best, were otherwise only names.

The mosaic map that paves the church at Madeba in Moab, east of the lower Jordan, introduces us to Fifth Century Jerusalem, and invites us to mingle with the pilgrims who throng the colonnaded street that runs through the city from the north gate to the south; we trudge with them the long road to Jericho where we may rest ourselves beneath the palms. We may even cross the river on a ferry, but only with care and caution for the map warns us that lions still lurk in "The Pride of Jordan"—the tangled jungle through which the river flowed.

The churches of Ravenna take us to the splendid Court of Justinian in the Sixth Century when the stately ceremonies of the palace were moulding the rites and rituals of the churches throughout the boundaries of the Empire.

On the walls of S. Apollinare Nuovo, virgins file in procession towards the throne of Mary while, across the aisle, the saints march forward to the throne of Jesus. The virgins wear the embroidered tunics, the short jackets with wide sleeves sewn with pearls and gathered at the waist with jewelled belts, that were worn by the patriciennes of the Byzantine Court and by the ladies-in-waiting who follow the Empress Theodora on the walls of S. Vitale. The robes worn by the saints on the opposite side of the nave repeat the fashions which obtained among the high dignitaries of the palace; angels, heroes of the Old Testament, and sometimes saints, have the splendid costumes of the Imperial Guard. At S. Vitale, Demetrius with other saints wears the dress of a Byzantine senator—the embroidered tunic, with the “chlamys,” woven in gold and caught up on the shoulder by a jewelled clasp.

In the same church the hem of the robe of the Empress Theodora is embroidered with a quite delightful representation of the visit of the Magi whereby we are reminded that the costumes of patricians were often worked with biblical scenes. Theodoret, a Syrian bishop, tells us that the entire history of Jesus was woven into the robe of a senator, and Coptic textiles have been found decorated with the story of Daniel, of S. Peter, the Crucifixion, and other scenes drawn from both Testaments. We are at least privileged to hope that the conversations of the Court harmonized with the costumes. David and Solomon are clothed like Grecian “basileis” and the benefactors of churches—Emperors, grandees, or bishops—wear the costumes of the Court

while the angels who present them to the celestial throne carry the golden staff that was the official insignia of the heralds of the palace. (So also does the angel of the Annunciation in the Cathedral of Parenzo, among many others.)

The influence of Byzantine court etiquette lived on in iconography far into the Middle Ages. On the façade of Nîmes Cathedral, and elsewhere, Cain and Abel present their offerings to the Lord with hands that are covered by a cloth—not for any reason understood by the sculptors but because, centuries before, all ministrants to the Eastern Emperor—the messenger who handed him a letter, the servant who offered him a dish—veiled their hands in token of respect. Similarly the Magi, coming in haste to present their gifts to the Holy Child, are shown at La Charité-sur-Loire hiding their hands beneath their mantles; while, on the right of the same tympanum, Simeon stretches out veiled hands to receive the Infant from the arms of Mary. The fact that the Virgin-Mother alone may hold the Child with unveiled hands echoes the decree of the Council of Ephesus which entitled her “Theotokos”—as the “Mother of God” she alone among mortals may thus hold her divine Son.

The West, however, never understood the meaning of the veiled hands and imitated, without comprehension, the traditions of the East. In a window of Chartres, in a carving of Le Mans, and in a relief of S. Lorenzo in Genoa the angels, sent to witness the baptism of Jesus, cover their hands with the garments that He has cast aside before entering the waters of the Jordan. At Rheims, and elsewhere, angels carry the souls of the Blessed Dead in napkins to lay them in the arms of Abraham.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> On the façade of S. Trophime at Arles the angels deliver the souls of the triumphant dead to *three* patriarchs who are separated from each other by a tree. Throughout the West Abraham usually sits alone; only in the East are Isaac and Jacob joined to Abraham, and only in the Orient does the tree appear as the symbol of Paradise.

Coming further down the centuries we learn that fashion spoke as imperatively to the Eleventh Century as it does today, for there is a convincing eloquence in the shocked dismay with which Count Robert of Normandy, visiting Rome, discovered that the Emperor Constantine, in his equestrian statue, wore no cloak—a garment without which no gentleman of that day would willingly appear in public. With knightly courtesy the Norman hastily dispatched a page, bidding him bring a cloak from the Count's wardrobe to replace the missing garment that the Emperor might be clad as became his august rank.

So far such glimpses as we have had into the life, the manners, costumes, and customs of men throughout the first Christian millennium have been given us by accident rather than by purpose. But a hundred years after Count Robert died the Church intentionally admits us into the life her children led, in shop or field, because of the development of her theology.

To the Thirteenth Century it was not enough that man should hope, pray, and wait for grace from God; the sin of Adam had placed him under the law of labour, wherefore every man in his station must toil to earn mercy from Almighty God. It is this conception of man's labour as a part of the divine redemptive plan that permits us to visit the shops of the "butcher, the baker, and the candlestick maker"—with some forty-five of their fellow craftsmen—and to watch them at their daily tasks through the glass of Chartres.

Here the butcher sits at a table that is spread with his offerings, while a customer points his finger as he asks the price of an unrecognizable viand and an assistant slices a joint with his long knife.

The baker seems to be having a good day, for a customer has just bought five loaves of bread and paid in cash. However, a

two-handled basket, full of unsold bread, stands at the baker's side—but perhaps the day is young.

The merchant tailor displays his goods to two young gentlemen as his clerk takes other samples from a chest; then, the bargain completed and the selection made, the assistant measures off the purchased material.

The furrier caresses his fur coats lovingly as he spreads them temptingly before two young ladies, while his shop-boy gathers still others from the master's stock.

The tale goes on; we see in succession the fishmonger with his two-wheeled cart, and then his counter where he sells; the shoemaker, cutting strips from his hides and stitching the leather on his knees; the master-sculptor, drinking a glass of wine as he watches his apprentice put the finishing touches to the robe of a king's recumbent statue. So we pass from window to window, visiting in turn the wine merchants, the vine-growers, blacksmiths, armourers, masons, carpenters, joiners, cartwrights, and coopers.

The Church, however, appears to have been more concerned with the peasant than with either prince or merchant, for it was the *ground*, not the shop or factory, that had been cursed for Adam's sin. Therefore her artists take us more often to the field or vineyard than to the counters of the members of the gilds.

In offering us again and again the "Labours of the Months"—those charming little sketches in genre that bring the details of the peasant's daily life so intimately before us—the artist was warning men that they must bow to the divine law imposed on Adam and his sons from behind the closing gates of his lost Paradise, and must make their spades, their ploughs, scythes, flails, or pruning knives work together with the heaven-sent sun, rain,

and dew to redeem the earth from the sentence that had been laid upon it.

The peasant might take courage, however, from the thought that the year throughout which he laboured was not only Christ's; in a symbolic sense it *was* Christ; the four seasons were His evangelists, its twelve months were His apostles, and its every day was hallowed by association with some moment in the life of Jesus or of His saints. The year, then, was a holy thing and the peasant—in fulfilling the labours of the months—was working together with Him who said "My Father worketh hitherto and I work." So the artists show us the peasant's life from the beginning of the year to the year's end.

In January men may take their ease or stuff themselves at banquets, for the earth itself must rest.

In February the warmer suns of Italy may call the farmer to his vineyards, but France is still in the grip of winter and the peasant remains at home. Here or there we see him coming in from the biting cold of the sharp north wind, from the storm and the snow. Without waiting to throw off his mantle he slips his feet out of his shoes and stretches himself before his comfortable fire. When March comes the pleasant chimney seat knows him no more, for the vines are calling and he must go forth to trim their branches and to spade about their roots.

April is the month of flowers and concession must be made to the poets, but man's labour may not be forgotten; wherefore, as at Chartres, she carries the flower of the grain to remind us that the fruit of wheat or rye is being formed upon the stalk.

May alone of all the months is often surrendered to the gentry, for it is the hunting month. Sometimes the hunter is on foot, or



again lords and ladies ride, falcon on wrist, under warm suns and blue skies.

In June the mowers are in the fields, round hats on their heads, whetstones on their thighs, and the scythes deep in the yellow grain.

When August comes the peasants, bare to the waist, begin the thrashing with the rhythmic rising and falling of their flails. The grapes are ripe in September, and the clusters are carried from the vineyards to the vats where the vintagers, bare of foot, tread out the juice with dancing steps.

In October the peasant resumes his mantle, for the autumn chill is in the air, and—seed sack on shoulder—goes into the fields to sow his grain.

In November he gathers firewood for the cold months that are near at hand, or drives his pigs into those forests of oak that were almost as extensive in the Thirteenth Century as they had been in Druidic days. The autumn winds have beaten down the acorns, and the swine grow fit and fat for the festivities of December.

Then, with the dying year, the work grows lighter and all the countryside prepares for the joys of Christmas time; the beef is made ready for the roasting; the cakes are in the oven. At last, glass in one hand and knife in the other, the peasant sits at his table with a huge ham before him, smiling broadly at the prospect of the feast and of the festivities to follow.

Nor does the artist forget the part that woman played in the common tasks of daily life; he shows her washing and combing the newly shorn wool, pounding the flax, carding and spinning it, and then winding the spun thread into a skein to make ready for the weaving.

In these ways the Church reminds men that, although now

bent to earth by their obedience to the law of toil imposed on Adam, they are making ready for that great day when they shall rise from the ground which their labours have redeemed, when Christ shall call each one by name and say, "Well done, good servant."

The Church is not always serious, however; she has a thousand sprightly tales to tell, and there are smiles or laughter mortared with her stones. She asks us to chuckle over embarrassed Aristotle—saddled, bridled and ridden by the vengeful courtesan Campaspe, against whose morals he had warned the Emperor who now witnessed, by invitation, the philosopher's plight. Then, with a broad grin, she tells us of Virgil, raised in a basket by a lady strong of arm if frail in virtue, only to be left suspended halfway up to the window of her tower chamber for the mockery of the people when day should dawn. She delights in the sight of wives who dispute with flying fists the authority of their husbands; and in that of husbands trundling their scolding wives in wheelbarrows to the ducking pond—as on a corbel of Mumby in Lincolnshire. At Bristol, England, the man, having ventured into the kitchen and meddled with the fire, has to dodge a plate which goes skimming past his ear, but he has less success in the protection of his beard which is being vigorously pulled by the hands of his helpmate. She shows us the lazy peasant sleeping between the rows of corn; the doctor treating his patient—not always decorously; the water-carrier at the fountain, the candle-maker in his shop, the farmer, bearing home a lamb from market.

There are tales of knightly battles to deliver fair maidens from loathsome dragons; of little children rescued from infant-eating ogres, and countless other stories of high, or low, adventure. Some of her romances seem a bit Rabelaisian to the Twentieth

Century, but the Thirteenth laughed without being in anywise shocked. But if the Church jests with us, she also moralizes. By her "Wheel of Fortune," where kings ride today on the crest and tomorrow are cast down with their toppling thrones as the relentless wheel turns on, she tells us that "The Lord maketh rich, and maketh poor; He lifteth up, but He also bringeth low," and all man's pomp is "one with Nineveh and Tyre."

On many cathedrals, as at Chartres and in Genoa, she points the schoolboy to the ass who found a lyre on which he tried in vain to play. "You have your books," she says; "learn to read them lest you be one day ashamed, like the ignorant ass who found a lyre from which others, but not he, could bring forth music." There was a brief but pungent moral in the sight of a foolish peasant offering pearls to a pig; in the scorched fox leaping from the mouth of a drunken man, and in the devil struggling in a basin of Holy Water.

As we read these tales in stone, with their clear moralities, we recall with wonder the bitter condemnations of the early Fathers that art sprang from the whisperings of demons who would employ the artist to destroy men's souls. If they were right, then surely the devils must have forgotten their intentions, for they spoke more often to the Middle Ages with the tongues of angels.

LOUIS BRÉHIER, *L'Art Chrétien*, Chap. V.

ÉMILE MÂLE, Vol. I, Chaps. I and VII, and pp. 247 ff.; Vol. II, Book II; Book IV, Chap. V.

## Chapter Thirteen

### TALES AND LEGENDS

THE crucified Christ of Lucca, carved in wood by Nicodemus and an angel, is so deeply buried beneath the jewels with which the faithful have covered it that the visitor has difficulty in discovering, beneath the adornments, the real appearance of the Saviour. In like manner the simple stories of the two Testaments became so overladen with myriads of legends, some drawn from apocryphas, others from rabbinical sources, and others still from seeds that germinated in the rich soil of the popular imagination, that it became impossible for the mediæval mind to distinguish the historical from the legendary, the substance from the ornamentation. This made the less difference, however, since—while the jewels of the Santo Volto were clearly recognized as something distinct from the image itself—the tales and legends were popularly accepted as divinely inspired additions to the Word, as a part of the Bible itself, sharing its inspiration and humanizing its story.

Women figured often in these tales, not always being drawn with a gentle hand—as might be expected in a monastic age. On the choir stalls of S. Martin-aux-Bois a sculptor tries in vain to portray the face and figure of a woman until Satan comes to his aid, for this is a task which demands the insight of a devil; mere man cannot achieve a woman without help from Hell. On the capital of many churches women take the forms of demons: mermaids, dangerous to seamen, and sirens—vampires who flew

by night, entering open windows, perching heavily upon the breasts of sleepers to give them evil dreams, and sometimes stealing infants from their cradles. Not least to be dreaded among these demons was Lilith who, the rabbis said, was the first woman to come from the hand of the Creator, having been made of the same clay with which God had fashioned man. This first experiment, however, proved disastrous, for Lilith claimed a lineage as old and as respectable as Adam's and went her own wilful way, paying scant attention to the orders of her lord and master. Therefore the Lord God, repenting of the evil He had done, made another woman to be man's helpmate, and this time He drew her from a rib in Adam's side that she might be less boastful of her equality of ancestry, more humble, and more willingly obedient. Thereupon Lilith, angry and resentful, vanished into the desert where she became a demon especially dangerous to children and to women in childbirth.

From Jewish legends comes also the explanation of a medallion on the façade of the Cathedral of Lyons where a workman on a tower drops a brick on the head of one who stands below. The rabbis said that when the "confusion of tongues" smote the builders of the Tower of Babel those whose business it was to keep the masons on the scaffoldings supplied with material, unable to understand their speech, frequently sent up the wrong things—mortar when the mason wished brick, and brick when he needed mortar. The masons, thinking that they were being mocked, were so angered that they hurled the material, mistakenly supplied, down on their supposed tormentors, killing many in this manner.

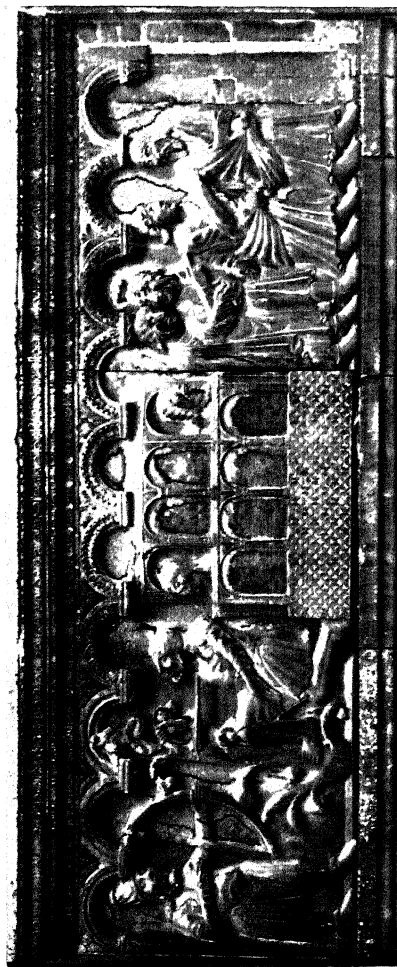
The tragic story of the murder of Abel, told in the iconography, is completed by the tale of the death of Cain who died, like his brother, at the hand of man despite the mark which God had

placed upon his forehead lest "any finding Cain should kill him," and despite also the sevenfold vengeance ordained for "whosoever slayeth Cain."

The manner of his death is indicated, according to Jewish sources, in one of the oldest fragments of primitive tribal songs that the Bible preserves for us. In the fourth chapter of Genesis Lamech sings to his wives, Adah and Zillah, "I have slain a man to my wounding, and a young man to my hurt." Who were these that fell at Lamech's hand? The Bible does not tell us but the rabbis do, and their story is repeated in stone at Bourges, Auxerre, Lyons, Modena (Italy), in the glass at Tours, at the Sainte Chapelle in Paris, and in many other places.

Lamech, being nearly blind in his old age, yet bravely continuing his hunting, employed a young boy, named Tubal-cain, as his guide. One day the boy heard a rustle in the bushes and, believing that some beast was hidden there, directed the old man's aim at the unseen mark. But it was Cain who hid behind the branches and the arrow, intended for a beast, slew the murderer of Abel. When Lamech learned the quarry of his bow he flew into a rage and killed the boy who had so fatefully directed his aim; thus Cain was the man, and Tubal-cain the youth, whom Lamech slew "to his wounding and his hurt."

In the bas-reliefs which encircle the choir of Notre-Dame in Paris a tale of the infancy of Jesus is begun which is continued on the exterior, near the apse on the rue du Cloître, and is concluded in the tympanum of the north portal of the façade. Inside the church, on the ambulatory screen, Joseph is portrayed leading the ass on the road to Egypt with Mary in the saddle holding the Infant in her arms; over the haunches of the animal appear the branches of a palm tree. On the third day of their flight, so reads the legend, Mary, weary and hungry, sat down



THE DEATH OF CAIN; FACADE, MODENA CATHEDRAL

By Niccolò e Guglielmo (1099). While out hunting, Lamech, blind and misguiding, shoots the slayer of Abel, who has hidden in a bush. This scene is based on rabbinical legend rather than on Genesis.



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#### THE FUNERAL OF THE VIRGIN: NOTRE-DAME, PARIS

Two episodes in one, from an apse relief (Fourteenth Century), rue du Cloître. The high priest of the Jews has laid hands on the coffin, meaning to seize the Virgin's body and burn it. His hands are imprisoned; he falls to the ground, leaving them glued to the casket.



to rest beneath a palm tree and called on Joseph to gather dates that they might eat and be refreshed. But the tree was high, the trunk smooth, and the fruits were beyond Joseph's reach. Thereupon the Holy Infant spoke: "Tree, bend down thy branches and nourish my mother with thy fruits." Instantly the obedient tree inclined its head and laid its dates in Mary's lap. The next day, as they resumed their journey, Jesus spoke again: "Palm tree, I command that one of thy branches shall be carried by my angels to the Paradise of my Father; and I also will that, hereafter, it shall be said of those who conquer in the battle for the faith that they have deserved the palm of victory." As He spoke an angel flashed from Heaven, plucked a branch, and swept back again through the clouds to the celestial gates.

This tree was to appear once more upon the earth, for when Mary was sixty years old an angel came to her in Jerusalem, as years before he had visited her in Nazareth, saying: "Your Son awaits you; He sends this palm branch to be carried before you on the third day after your death." Not long thereafter the disciples, scattered in all parts of the world on their various missions, were suddenly seized and swept away by a mighty force which transported them to the chamber where the dying Mary lay. That same night, as they kept their vigil, Jesus appeared surrounded by the heavenly host, and the soul of Mary passed gently into the keeping of her Son.

The second chapter is told in the bas-reliefs on the rue du Cloître where two men appear; one stands with his hands pressed against the side of the casket from which he cannot free himself; the other has fallen to the ground while his detached hands remain glued to the coffin.

These are not two men but two scenes in the same drama, the one man being represented in successive incidents in the tale. As

Mary was being carried to the grave the Jews, led by the high priest, attempted to seize the body that they might burn it, but as the high priest grasped the coffin he found his hands withered and imprisoned; he could neither overthrow the casket nor relinquish his grasp. In agony of mind he called upon S. Peter. "You cannot be healed," said the Saint, "until you believe in Jesus Christ, and in her who is being carried here."

"I believe that Jesus was the true Son of God, and that Mary was His mother," cried the terrified Jew. Instantly he was released, but not his hands which, parted from his arms, remained attached to the casket. Then S. Peter said, "Say 'I believe in Jesus Christ and in Mary who remained a virgin after having borne a son.' " When the priest had repeated these words his hands were restored and the life again flowed through his arms.

Over the north portal of the west front, which is dedicated to the Virgin, the final chapter is written: in one panel of the tympanum the disciples lay Mary in her grave; in an adjoining panel Jesus, with His holy angels, comes to translate her body to the City "Whose builder and maker is God," while, just above, Mary sits at the right hand of Jesus enthroned and crowned, with all the world, all suns and stars, beneath her feet. Thus the Virgin whom the Council of Ephesus, eight hundred years before, had acclaimed as "Theotokos"—the "Mother of God"—now rose from the dead to become, as Isis of Egypt had been long before her day, "The Queen of Heaven."

Another quite beautiful story of the flight into Egypt appears at the portal of the Church of Rougemont and in the mural paintings of S. Maurice-sur-Loire.

On their journey the Holy Family passed a farmer who was sowing his grain. Jesus, putting His hand into the sack, threw a fistful of the seed into the field and immediately the grain

sprang up, as high, as plentiful and ripe as if it had been nurtured for the full season in the ground.

Soon after the soldiers of Herod came, pursuing the Holy Family and hard upon their heels. Seeing the farmer they asked him if a man and a woman carrying a child had passed that way. "Yes," replied the farmer, "I saw them pass when I was sowing this field." The soldiers, fresh from the massacre at Bethlehem, thought he must be speaking of someone else for this grain surely had been sown months before, so they abandoned their pursuit and returned to Herod.

In many places, in the glass of Le Mans for instance, two golden idols falling from their pedestals illustrate an apocryphal story of the infancy of Jesus. When the Holy Family, coming at last to Egypt, entered the temple at Hermopolis the great stone idols fell and were shattered on the pavement, thereby fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah: "The Lord . . . shall come into Egypt: and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at His presence. . . ."<sup>1</sup> The matter being swiftly reported, Aphrodoseus, the governor of the district, hurried to the temple where, seeing the fallen and broken images of his gods, he bowed down and worshipped Jesus. Later, tradition states, Aphrodoseus went to Gaul, preached in Narbonne and became the first bishop of Béziers. The story, manufactured to vindicate a prophecy, was adopted by the Church and the artists were authorized to represent it.

Thanks also to the legends we have many little glimpses into the lives of those men who appear merely as a part of the background in the gospel narratives.

The Penitent Thief of Calvary had met Jesus years before that dreadful day when he hung beside Him on the cross. When the Holy Family were on their way to Egypt, penniless, hungry,

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah xix. 1.

spent with weary travel over terrible roads and through savage deserts, they were halted by a brigand who, seeing their condition, had compassion on them. He treated them with courtesy, rested and refreshed them, and parted from them only when he had guided them to the highway that led to Egypt. It was to this brigand that the dying Christ gave His great promise: "This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise."

S. Martial, honoured in the city of Limoges, was the one to whom Jesus pointed when He said, "Except ye become as this little child ye can in nowise enter the Kingdom of Heaven." Many years after S. Martial waited on the table on the night of the Last Supper and carried the basin of water while Jesus washed the disciples' feet.

S. Sernin of Toulouse held the robe of the Master when he entered the River Jordan to be baptized by John; S. Restitutus, the first Bishop of S. Paul-Trois-Châteaux, was the man born blind whom Jesus healed; and Zachæus the Publican, short of stature, who had climbed a sycamore tree that he might see Jesus enter Jericho, came to Gaul where he lived in solitude, giving the name he had assumed—Amadour—to the savage little valley of Rocamadour, wherefore that little village became, and is still, a famous place of pilgrimage.

The Descent into Hell, which lay between the burial of Jesus and His first appearance to Mary Magdalene, was another favourite theme of preachers and artists and is often represented in the windows, the carvings, and the miniatures. The Gospel of Nicodemus supplied a vivid account of Christ's great conquest as it was witnessed by Carinus and Leucius, sons of the old priest Simeon who—having been delivered from Hell together with Adam, Eve, the prophets and saints of the Old Testament—were permitted to return to earth and to live for many years near



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THE HARROWING OF HELL; NAVE MOSAIC, TORCELLO CATHEDRAL.

Christ tramples on Death, the broken gates of Hell, and the useless keys. He leads Adam by the hand; John the Baptist attends Him; the pre-Christian Redeemed stand ready on either side to follow Him out to Paradise.



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S. GREGORY: TRANSEPT PORCH, CHARTRES

The Golden Legend gives each saint in stone or glass his proper attributes. Here S. Gregory receives dictation from a dove. From beneath his feet peeps his secretary, who glimpsed the miraculous visitation unbeknown.

Arimathæa. Here they spent their days and nights in prayer, but never speaking with their fellow men. Sometimes belated passers-by heard their cries and supplications, but otherwise they remained as silent as the grave from which they had been delivered.

When the priests of the temple came to question them, they called for pen and parchment and then wrote:

"When we were with our fathers amid the shadows of death we were suddenly illumined by a golden light and by a royal radiance. At once Adam began to tremble with joy as he cried, 'That light streams from the Author of the life eternal who promised us a day that should know neither shadow nor end.' Then all the just of the Ancient Law rejoiced, but Hell was troubled; the Prince of Darkness feared the coming of Him who had already defied and defeated his power when Lazarus rose from the dead. 'I tremble,' he said to his servants, 'for we were not able to keep our hold on Lazarus who escaped us with the swiftness of the eagle.' Even as he spoke there came a voice which echoed through the depths of Hell like rolling thunder: 'Princes, open wide your gates, and be ye lifted up ye everlasting doors, for the King of Glory shall come in.' Then the Prince of Hell bade his unholy ministers, 'Lock the gates of brass and close them with their bars of iron; be valiant and resist.' Again the thunder rolled: 'Princes, open wide your gates, and be ye lifted up ye everlasting doors, for the King of Glory cometh in.' Then the Lord came in His Majesty; the darknesses of Hell fled before Him; He broke our bonds and set us free from the prison bars of our faults and sins. Satan, Death, and the infernal legions, seized with terror, cried, 'Who art thou? Whence comest thou?' But Jesus disdained all reply. Crushing Death beneath His feet, overthrowing Satan, and robbing Hell of all its power He took Adam by the hand and calling, 'Come unto Me, all My saints,' He led us forth into the

light. Then we sang His praises, singing 'Blessed be He that cometh in the Name of the Lord; Hallelujah!' David, Habakkuk and the other prophets recited their prophecies wherein they foretold that which we now saw come to pass as, led by S. Michael, we entered Paradise where we were welcomed by Enoch and Elijah, who had never tasted death, and by the Good Thief, who bore the sign of the cross upon his shoulder."<sup>2</sup>

This scene, the Harrowing of Hell, was a favourite with the artists, who repeated it over and over again. The gates of Hell fall from their sockets; with the staff of His cross Jesus pierces the mouth of Leviathan; and Adam, Eve, and a long procession of the heroes of the Old Testament, pass upward and outward from the jaws of death.

The story told by Carinus and Leucius is, to us, a mere romance, drawn from a fertile if somewhat morbid imagination; but to Honorius of Autun and to his generation it was an actual experience given to reassure men who walked by day and night amid perils from which we were long since set free.

In his book on *Oriental Illustrations of Scripture*, quoted by Lenormant in *Chaldean Magic*, p. 39, Roberts writes:

"For the Hindoos there is not a hamlet without a tree, or some secret place, in which evil spirits are supposed to dwell. Hence the people live in constant fear of those spirits of darkness, and nothing but the most pressing necessity will induce a man to go abroad after the sun has gone down. See the unhappy wight who is obliged to go out in the dark; he repeats his incantations, and touches his amulets; he seizes a firebrand to keep off his foes, and begins his journey. He goes on with gentle steps; he listens, and again repeats his prayers. Should he hear the rustling of a leaf, or the moaning of some living animal, he gives himself up for

<sup>2</sup> Mâle, Vol. II, p. 225.



lost. Has he worked himself up into a state of artificial courage? He sings aloud to keep his courage up. But after all his efforts, his heart will not beat with its wonted ease till he shall have gained a place of safety." And Lenormant adds, "This description of the modern Hindoo is in every way applicable to the ancient Chaldees, and gives a good idea of the superstitious terrors in which they were kept by their beliefs."

It is also not inapplicable to the lives men lived in the Middle Ages; for them too the incubus and the succubus, vampires, phantoms, and spectres inhabited the night and haunted the darkness, wherefore these legends, numberless as the sands of the sea, while they may seem very childish and absurd to us, or charmingly poetic according to our point of view, were taken very seriously in the Romanesque and Gothic centuries. They gave men assurance that the celestial powers that were for them were mightier than all the demonic forces arrayed against them. They lent courage and confidence to life.

If we could analyze the individual lives then lived by men, if we could share their thoughts and feelings and trace to their sources the inspirations which calmed their minds, strengthened their hearts, and guided their actions, we would find that these tales and legends played a far larger part than we have realized in creating the qualities of character which made those distant days so peculiarly an Age of Faith.

## Chapter Fourteen

### THE GOLDEN LEGEND

THE Golden Legend was the Church's answer to the cry of S. Thomas, "Lord, we know not whither Thou goest and how can we know the way?", for the lives of the saints, recorded in the Legend, revealed that way, showing the Christian his road, instructing him in the discipline of life, and promising him help and guidance if he followed in their steps.

The value of the saints to penitent sinners lay less in their past obedience to heavenly visions and the resultant inspirational character of their lives than it did in their supernatural powers as successors to the pagan gods, and their abilities to share, directly and miraculously, the dangers, problems, or necessities of their petitioners. Deliverance from illness, safety on the road, success for man's venture, fertility for his vineyards or his fields, protection for his flocks and herds—all these, with many other gifts, lay within the power of the saints and were given to those who sought them with a candle and a prayer. Their powers extended to the winds, the rain, the hail, sleet, or snow, and they gave good days or bad according to their pleasure, even as the dead gods had done. S. Cæsarius of Arles had power over the tempests that swept Provence; his glove, when filled with air and carried in the valley of Vaison, unchained the winds; S. Barbara broke the menacing power of the thunder, wherefore church bells were decorated with her image and her name. In France S. Médard, and in England S. Swithin, were masters of

the rains, and their traditional control over the weather is embalmed in doggerels that remain familiar to our day; on one side of the Channel the children sing:

"S'il pleut le jour de Saint Médard,  
Il pleut quarante jours plus tard,"

while, on the other, they chant:

"S. Swithin's Day, if thou dost rain,  
For forty days it will remain;  
S. Swithin's Day, if thou be fair,  
For forty days 'twill rain nae mair."

Thus the ancient paganism was perpetuated under cover of homage to the saints.

The Golden Legend also taught the Christian the geography of his world, as that world was then conceived. In celebrating the saints' days, and in following their fortunes, the son of the Church was of necessity transported from land to land and from sea to sea; he visited the deserts of the Thebaid, the cities of Italy, the islands of the sea, the Holy Land, and even India—the entire world was brought within his ken. By the end of the Church year he had been taken to every clime and country until he knew his world almost as well as he knew his own town.

Furthermore he lived in a world of romance, for the tales that were told for him in stone or in glass were filled with strange and wonderful adventures. For instance, a window of Chartres told him the marvellous story of S. Eustace, a general in the army of Trajan, who had forsaken his pagan faith when he saw the image of Christ suddenly appear between the horns of a hunted stag. Converted by the miracle Eustace received baptism, with his wife; but the Emperor, angered by the saint's apostasy,

deprived him of his rank and reduced him to poverty. Hoping to retrieve his fortunes he embarked for Egypt, but as he was unable to pay the fare the captain of the vessel held his wife as hostage for the passage money and Eustace was compelled to land with his two children but without his wife. Arriving at a stream too deep for the children to ford, he carried one boy across the river but when he was in midstream, returning for the younger son, a wolf appeared on one bank and a lion on the other. Each beast seized a child and vanished into the woods, leaving Eustace bereft of both wife and sons. In despair he took service with a neighbouring farmer while the boys, rescued by peasants, grew to manhood not far from the farm where Eustace was employed. Years after, soldiers of Trajan, passing the saint as he was working in the fields, recognized their old general, and Eustace, restored to Trajan's favour and to his former military rank, found his two sons enlisted in his legion. The boys, in their turn, were recognized by their mother, now a servant in an inn, and the family was again united. But their good fortune was of short duration for when Hadrian, Trajan's successor, learned that Eustace was a Christian, he ordered a bronze bull to be made wherein he and his family were burned to death.

Wherever the banner of England flies it carries the memory of S. George. According to the legend the scene of the saint's great achievement was near Silene, in Lybia, where a monstrous dragon dwelt in the foul depths of a great swamp. The neighbouring city sent a regular tribute of sheep, for if this should fail the monster crawled from his lair to the walls of the city where he poisoned the air with his horrible breath. When sheep were lacking the lots were cast to choose a boy or a girl for deliverance to the dragon. One day the lot fell upon the daughter of the king; although the pitiful people delayed for eight dan-

gerous days, seeking to discover some way to avoid the sacrifice, at last they had to unbar the gates and let her pass through and make her way to the impatient beast. S. George, however, met her as he rode towards the city and read the agony in her face and tears. Hardly had he heard her story when the dragon appeared, crawling up from the ooze and slime of the marsh. Despite the prayers of the princess that he "make haste and fly," the saint sprang upon his horse, commended himself to Christ, made the sign of the cross upon his lance, and charged right valiantly. His spear struck the monster with such force that it pierced clear through his scaly hide and pinned him to the ground. Thereupon the saint bade the princess undo her girdle and pass it around the fallen dragon's neck; when this was done, the beast arose and followed her like a well-trained dog.

The glass of Chartres, which tells so many marvellous tales, tells this also of S. George.

The origin of the story is simple and naïve. Throughout the Orient idolatry had been everywhere represented as a monster of some sort; thus the dragon became the symbol of paganism, the foe of the saints who carried the gospel to an unbelieving world. It is probable that the princess personifies the province of Cappadocia, evangelized by S. George, while the dragon personifies the paganism which was conquered by the labours of the saint.

As the centuries passed the primitive symbolism was forgotten while the image remained, handed down from age to age; so the popular imagination created a legend to explain the slaying of a dragon in the presence of a maid. This interpretation helps us to understand all other scenes wherein a saint gives battle to a dragon. Thus, according to the legends, S. Romanus of Rouen placed a monster in chains who for years had devastated Nor-

mandy; S. Marcellus drove a horrible serpent from its habitat in a cemetery; S. Julian and S. Pavice killed dragons who had kept the people from drawing water at a certain fountain; and similar stories were told of S. Lo, S. Front, S. Germain, and of no less than ten of the great regional saints of Brittany, including S. Brieuc and S. Pol.

Another tale of the Golden Legend, read in the refectories and retold in stone or glass, is that of S. Christopher, a giant of Canaan, twelve cubits in height and of a terrible aspect. Wishing to serve only the mightiest, and hearing that a certain king was the most powerful ruler in the world, S. Christopher entered the royal service, continuing therein until the king, hearing someone pronounce the name of the devil, hastily and fervently crossed himself, thereby betraying the fact that there was one of whom even he stood in dread and awe. S. Christopher, seeing that the king feared the devil, immediately left the king's service and went in search of one who is never hard to find.

Hardly had he found him than he lost him, for Satan took a hurried flight when he came unexpectedly upon a crucifix erected at a crossroads. Christopher, unafraid but puzzled, followed and overtook the fiend who, being pressed with awkward questions, at last admitted that there was one mightier than himself whom he had good reason to fear. Thereupon S. Christopher left the devil and went in search of Christ.

A hermit, whom he encountered in the desert, bade him fast if he would find the Master, but the great giant was in nowise able to follow such counsels. Then the hermit set him to his prayers, but Christopher soon wearied of this discipline and fell asleep.

Finally the holy man took the giant to the banks of a river where many were drowned each year, and Christopher embarked



#### CRAFTSMEN OF CHARTRES

The sin of Adam had placed men under the law of labour, wherefore every man in his station must toil to earn God's mercy. To the Thirteenth Century the crafts, as part of the great redemptive scheme, are worthy of representation in Church art. Here the furnace extolls his wares; two customers visit a draper.



*Princeton Univ. Lib'y.*



*Tyndall, Ely*

#### DOMESTIC SCENE: ELY CATHEDRAL

An enraged housewife attacks a thieving fox. Carving below the shelf of a miserere—a back rest that collapsed under monks who dozed off at their Offices.



*Archives Photographique—Paris*

#### GOTHIC SKETCHES IN GENRE

"Labours of the Months": pedestal carvings from the porch, Amiens Cathedral. Six signs of the zodiac above the appropriate phases of peasant toil.



upon his famous career as a ferryman. One night an infant called in the darkness; coming from his hut he took the child on his shoulders and began the crossing, but with each step the child grew heavier until even S. Christopher's great knees bent beneath him and he had difficulty in coming safe to the opposite bank. When the infant was put down upon the shore Christopher demanded his name, "For," said he, "you have been so heavy that if I had carried the whole world I could not have had a heavier burden."

"Be not astonished, Christopher," said the child, "for He whom you have carried on your shoulders created the entire world. Know that I am Jesus Christ."

With that the child vanished but S. Christopher found his staff, which he had thrust into the ground as he talked, covered with green leaves and flowers.

The story of S. Thomas is told in many places—over the portal of Semur, in the glass of Chartres, in the windows of Bourges and of Tours.

Gondoforus, King of India, longed for a palace more splendid even than those in Rome. Having heard of the skill of S. Thomas he sent a messenger to call the apostle to his side and the saint obeyed, because the gospel had not yet been preached in India. After many adventures and many miracles—some performed by him and others divinely vouchsafed for him—S. Thomas reached the royal city, where he received from the king the plans of the palace and money from the treasury for the completion of the work. In the absence of Gondoforus, who was on tour throughout his kingdom, Thomas gave himself up to the preaching of the gospel and the relief of the poor with such whole-heartedness that he converted a large part of the city. When Gondoforus re-

turned and found his money gone but no palace built, he threw the apostle into prison and sentenced him to the stake.

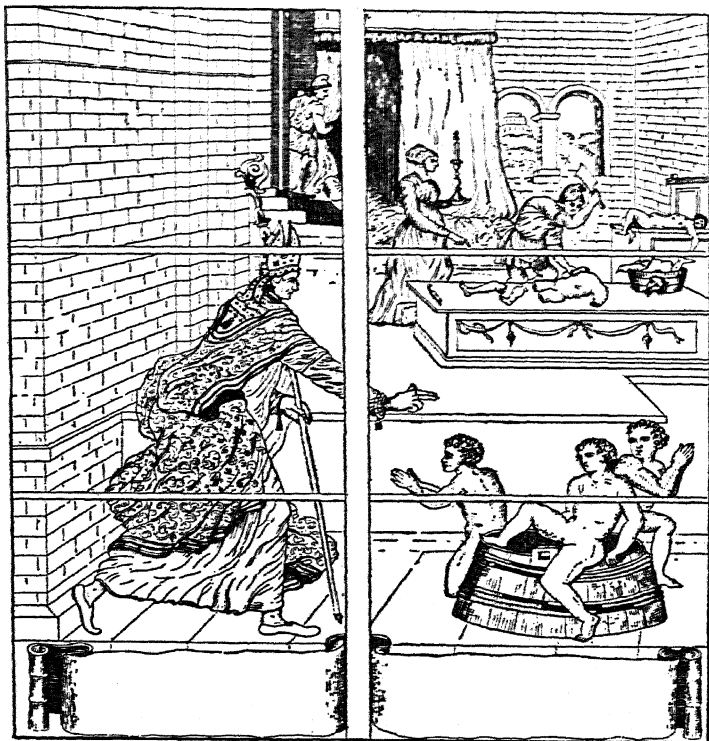
On the eve of the execution, however, the brother of the king, miraculously risen from the dead, appeared to Gondoforus. "My brother," he said, "I have seen the palace of gold, silver, and jewels which this man has built in Paradise for you." The startled king sent for S. Thomas who bade him and his risen brother to "believe and be baptized, for there are many palaces in heaven prepared for those who believe."

The legend originated in a metaphor. It was commonly said that the Apostles "built the edifice of the faith," that they "built a temple of living stones, which is the Church." When the words were taken literally S. Thomas became an architect and the builder's square his emblem.

The misinterpretation of ancient symbols led to some fantastic errors. The favourite saint of Mediterranean sailors was S. Elmo, sometimes known as S. Erasmus, whose images decorated the bows of the feluccas of Latin seas. As the patron saint of sailors he was given, quite logically, the capstan with a cable wound around it as his emblem. But when the worship of the saint was transported to the interior of the country, when chapels far from the sea were dedicated in his honour, the emblem of the cable and the capstan, no longer understood, demanded a new legend to explain them. The cable became the intestines of the Saint, and the capstan a spindle upon which they had been wound by the executioners who had martyred S. Erasmus by disembowelling him. Therefore sufferers from the colic secured a saint to whom they might appeal, one who surely—after his experience—could understand their pains and would come swiftly to their aid. In some parts of France mothers hung skeins of wool around his statue, rude imitations of intestines, as they sought his aid

for little children when the apples were as green as they were tempting on the trees of Normandy.

The legend of three children, murdered by an innkeeper, cut in pieces, and placed in a salting-tub, only to be restored again



#### S. NICHOLAS RESTORES THREE CHILDREN TO LIFE

In the background, the same children are being cut up for the salting tub. From a Sixteenth Century window in S. Etienne, Beauvais. (From G. G. Coulton, *Art and the Reformation*.)

to life by the good S. Nicholas—told in the glass of Le Mans, Troyes, Chartres, and Bourges—is one of many tales that illustrate the concern of the saint for little children, but it owes its existence to the attempt of an imaginative people to explain a scene in an unfamiliar story.

According to the early version, told in the Golden Legend, three officers of Constantine, unjustly imprisoned and condemned, were snatched from the very hands of the executioner by S. Nicholas. By all the rules of mediæval art—rules which are in force also in the carvings on Egyptian Temples—the important figures in the scene, be they kings of Egypt or Christian saints, were given a superhuman stature; thus S. Nicholas is represented as a giant, while the three soldiers are shown in miniature with the stature of infants. Their heads, emerging from a tower, indicate that they had been delivered from a prison. Christians of the West, to whom the cult of S. Nicholas came only in the Eleventh Century, ignorant of the legend, created a new one to explain the pictures. Thus the three officers became little children, the tower became a salting-tub, and the popular story of the ogre and the ogress of Perrault—those killers of children—was added to complete the legend.

Another story of S. Nicholas is too delightful to be passed over; I borrow from Mr. Coulton who quotes the tale from the *Metrical Life of S. Nicholas*, written about the year 1155 by Robert Wace.

An unknown stranger, who had lodged with a woman of Myra one night, was suddenly chosen, by the inspiration and command of God, to be bishop of the city.

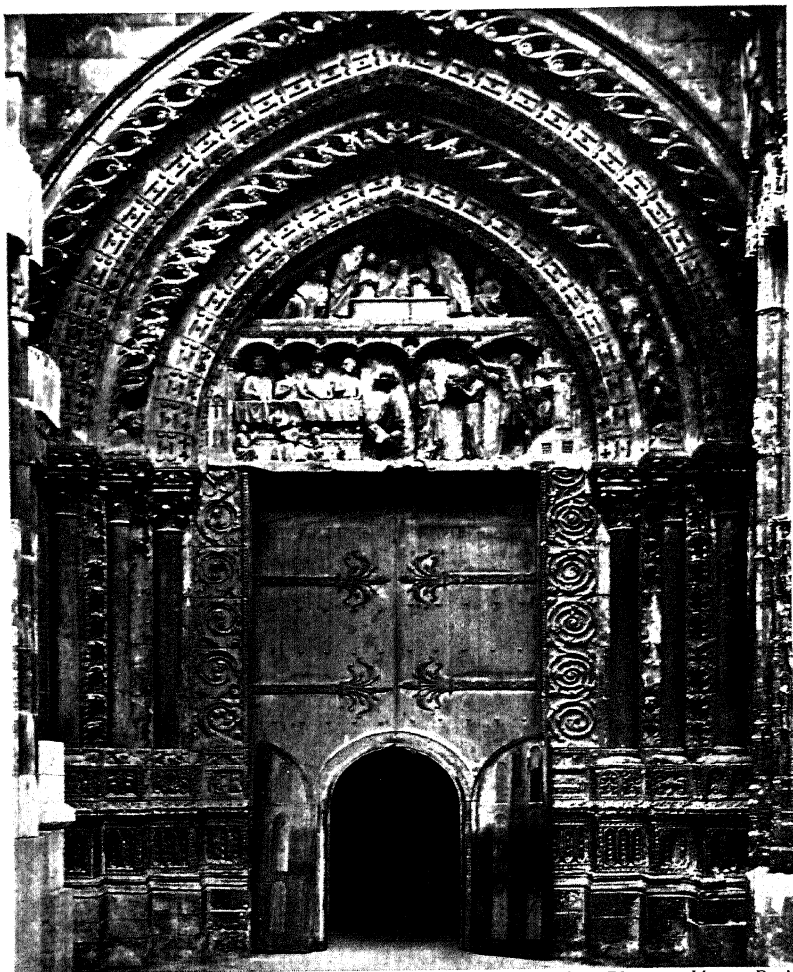
“The hostess of the house where he had lodged and slept that night, hearing that he had been ordained and set in the bishop’s



*Alinari*

#### THE PILGRIM PATH

By Benedetto Antellami (Twelfth Century). Sculpture on the façade, S. Donnino Cathedral. Flanking the Presentation scene, second plane, an angel guides three pilgrims on their way.



*Archives Photographique—Paris*

#### THE FEAST OF HEROD

The S. Jean door, Rouen Cathedral (Thirteenth Century). Below the funeral of S. John in the apex, Salome (centre) dances on her hands, entertaining Herod as the pilgrims had been entertained by strolling acrobats along the way. At right, the executioner brandishes his sword while John kneels in his dungeon.

seat, for the joy that she felt at this news left her child in the bath; for she had that evening made a fire and the child was in an earthen vessel—so confused was this mother, and so beside herself with joy, that she left her child on the fire. The fire burned, the water waxed hot, and then it began to boil, to wallop and to roar; and the child within the pan, whose body was tender and new, sat within this boiling water and played with the bubbles at his will; never in this boiling water did it feel the smallest hurt. When the Mass [of Nicholas' consecration] was over, then the mother bethought herself that she had left her child in the bath upon the burning fire. Then she went running homewards and crying upon the child by name. When she had come within her house, as a woman distraught, she found the child in all health, safe and sound within the boiling pan. Then she took the child and brought it before the whole people and told them the miracle that had befallen her. The people held this for a great marvel; much did S. Nicholas wax forthwith in great renown throughout that country.”<sup>1</sup>

The story fills a medallion in the glass of Auxerre, where one little devil stirs the fires with his long iron, while another busily fans the flames with his bellows.

In the Eleventh Century the remains of S. Nicholas, whose church in Myra had been so ravaged by the Moslems that only three monks dared remain to guard it, were removed to Bari, in Southern Italy, where the new tomb became a goal for countless pilgrims. Thereafter he who had so often protected little children became their patron saint. He it is who—with “Dancer, and Prancer, with Donner and Blitzen”—rides the skies on Christmas Eve, glides down our chimneys, and fills our stockings. Once, when I was a very small boy, I actually heard his

<sup>1</sup> G. G. COULTON, *Art and the Reformation*, p. 285.

voice, for he spoke to me in answer to a letter that I had carefully printed and then burned on the wood fire blazing in the hearth. I knew immediately that he had read the letter in the



#### THE CHILD UNHURT IN THE BOILING BATH

A miracle of S. Nicholas, shown in a Thirteenth Century window in Auxerre Cathedral. (From G. G. Coulton, *Art and the Reformation*.)

ashes which the flames carried up the chimney, and never doubted but that it was *his* voice, and none other, that came rumbling down the flues.

The statues of S. Nicholas, S. Christopher, and of all other saints were intended less for the decoration of the cathedral than for the veneration of the people; therefore they must be so portrayed by the artists that each one could be easily recog-



nized and distinguished. Here was a problem that demanded ingenuity, resourcefulness, and insight.

Some identifying insignia, inherited from pagan days, had been adopted in early Christian centuries. Among the most familiar of these is the nimbus, a disk placed behind the head—square if the recipient were living, round if he were dead. Prior to the Sixth Century the nimbus was used to denote any person of importance. It encircles the head of Trajan on the Arch of Constantine; Justinian wears it in the mosaics of S. Vitale at Ravenna, as does also Theodora—a Magdalene among Empresses. Even Herod has it at S. Maria Maggiore while a Fourth Century fresco in the cemetery of S. Agnes denies it to the Virgin. In this century it always graced the head of Christ; before it closed it was given to the angels and, a hundred years later, to the saints. When the cross was inserted within the nimbus some member of the Trinity was thereby indicated; when it became an aureole, encircling the entire body, one of the Trinity, the Virgin, or possibly the souls of the Blessed were introduced. Bare feet were permitted only to the Father, the Son, the angels, and Apostles; the artist who carved a Virgin with unshod feet would have been guilty of little less than a serious heresy. Throughout the Romanesque period the saints were given no other insignia than a book, but since this could only distinguish them as a class, not as individuals, the Thirteenth Century employed two other devices. First, they placed the implements of this martyrdom in the saint's hands. This would have been more definite if the age had agreed as to the manner of his death, or if the same fate had not befallen so many holy men; yet in many cases the device was successful. The sword could indicate S. Paul; the X-shaped cross, S. Andrew; the club betokened the presence of S. James the Less, and the gridiron

that of S. Lawrence, while S. Denis carried his head in his hands (although some eighty saints had to walk thus incommoded). Other emblems than those of martyrdom were often used. The pilgrim's staff stood for S. James the Great; the architect's square for S. Thomas. One of the figures on the porch of Amiens holds a cup in his hands, and no man needed to be told that this was S. John. Had not the High Priest of Ephesus given the saint a cup of deadly poison whose virulence had just been tested upon two condemned criminals? S. John, however, not only drained the cup with impunity, but immediately thereafter passed his mantle over the two whom the poison had slain, thereby restoring them to life. S. Martin is accompanied by a wild goose, for his feast came at the beginning of winter when the migratory birds were flying to the South.

Again a small figure might be placed beneath the feet of the saint to identify him by recalling some well-known incident of his life or death. Beneath the statue of S. Denis crouches one of the lions to which his headless body was cast; under the feet of S. George is a wheel to recall the manner of his death; thus the triumphant saints appear trampling underfoot the instruments of their torture. Sometimes a scene from the life of the saint is used to identify his statue. At Chartres a tall, emaciated saint inclines his ear to a dove, perched upon his shoulders; beneath the pedestal the artist has carved the head of a man with face and eyes upturned. Of course this can be none other than S. Gregory the Great whose secretary, peeping through the curtain, saw a dove dictating to the pope all the words that he should write. S. Mary of Egypt may be quickly recognized by the three loaves of bread she carries in her hands; for everyone knew that the saint had passed forty days in the desert, miraculously sustained on such scanty fare.



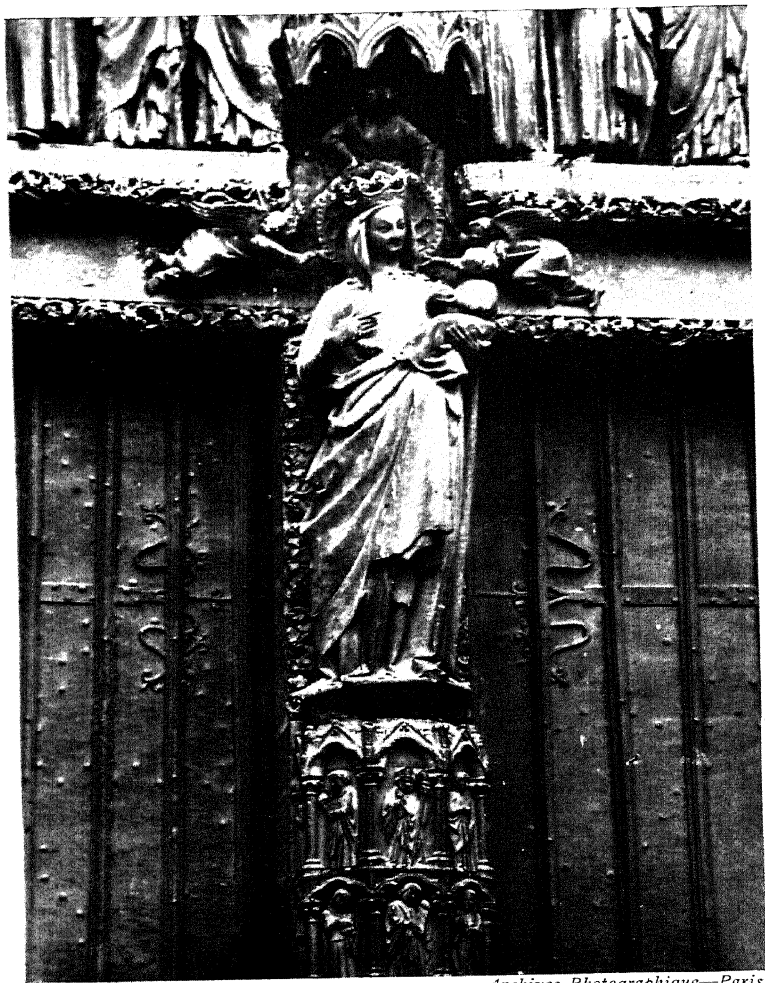
*Princeton Univ. Lib'y.*



*Columbia Univ. Lib'y.*

#### SOUVENIRS OF PILGRIMAGE, NORTH AND SOUTH

ABOVE: Statue of Constantine, from the church at Chateaufort-sur-Charente. An inspiration carried North from Rome, under misapprehension, from a triumphal statue of Marcus Aurelius, persecutor of the Faith. BELOW, on the arch: Arthurian legend over a door of Modena Cathedral. A subject carried South by itinerant singers of France.



*Archives Photographique—Paris*

#### THE VIRGIN AND CHILD: SOUTH DOOR, AMIENS

Already (late Thirteenth Century) the sculptor's increasing technical facility, responsive to the spreading humanism of the times, has led him to carve a Virgin and Child which is almost a portrait-group; more nearly a proud mother with her first-born than Mary "Theotokos" and the Eternal Word.

Places as well as people were indicated by conventionalized signs—waving, concentric, and indented lines represented the heavens; if a hand appeared, thrusting through the “clouds,” it showed the divine intervention in the affairs of men. Similar lines, parallel instead of concentric, stood for water—river, lake or sea; a stalk crowned by one or two leaves indicated a tree and that the action was taking place on earth; a tower pierced by a gate represented a city. If an angel appeared on the walls the city was Jerusalem the blessed, eternal in the heavens.

Iconography thus spoke an ideographic language, not only through a multitude of symbols but also in the composition, for the honour in which a character was held was indicated by his position in the scheme—whether he stood at the top or at the bottom; on the right or on the left.

So the Church, through her artists, told her countless tales and identified her scenes and characters. Beginning with the pre-creative councils of the Almighty she showed men God seated on His throne as He planned all the steps of the wondrous Seven Days. The universe was still without form and void; darkness and chaos inhabited space. Then—on portals, capitals, or in the windows—we follow the progress of Creation day by day; we watch God holding the sun in one hand and the moon in the other as He thoughtfully considers just where He shall place them in the sky; we see Him thrust back the sea that the dry land may appear and at the last, when the work is finished, we see Him sound asleep (at Amiens) resting His head on His staff, like a tired labourer after a long day’s work.

We read the stories of Eden, the Temptation, the Sin of Adam, the Expulsion from Paradise; we follow all the consequences

that ensued until the deluge wiped out the sinning human race, sparing only a far-from-perfect Noah.

From the days of Ararat to those of Nazareth and Calvary men waited and longed for the fulfilment of a great promise, repeated from age to age not merely by the prophets but also by the prophetic course of Israel's history, until it was realized in the person of Jesus Christ.

Then the Golden Legend took up the task the Church had inherited from the writers of the Old Testament and from the evangelists of the New; for that Legend told the stories of those holy men or women to whom God had entrusted the duty of so living and dying that, through them, every man might clearly see his path in life; to them also He had given the right and the power to answer prayer, even though that answer demanded miracles.

## Chapter Fifteen

### THE PILGRIM ROADS

FROM early days of the Church's history the Pilgrim Roads have influenced and enriched the iconography of the Church and, in lesser measure, have moulded her architecture.

The discovery of the "True Cross" in 327, the erection of basilicas on the holy places associated with the life of Christ, thrilled the imagination in even the tiniest villages of Europe and sent myriads of the faithful overseas to worship where Christ had set His feet.

The "Bordeaux Pilgrim" in 334; Paula, "Matron of Rome," and S. Silvia of Aquitaine in 388 were but three of the countless number who, Eusebius tells us, came to the Holy Land from all parts of the world. Some of these pilgrims went as far as the "House of Abraham" at Haran, the "Grave of Moses" on Mt. Nebo, the "Dwelling of Job" in the land of Uz, and the "Mountain of God" at Sinai.

There are many indications that these far voyagers brought back with them memories and souvenirs which influenced the iconography of the Church, not only in their own days but down to the Middle Ages. For instance, the figures of the Magi wearing Phrygian caps (which the pilgrims saw in the mosaics of the church in Bethlehem) appear in the ampoules of Monza, on sarcophagi in the Lateran Museum, on that of the Exarch Isaac in Ravenna, on the robe worn by the Empress Theodora

at S. Vitale, and on many Romanesque churches—as over a portal of Notre-Dame du Port at Clermont-Ferrand.<sup>1</sup>

Even when the Moslems swept up from Arabia and wrested Syria from Christian hands the pilgrim tide was hardly checked, and the influence of the roads continued. The records show a constantly increasing number of travellers to the holy places of Palestine; they report six pilgrimages in the Eighth Century, twelve in the Ninth, sixteen in the Tenth, and one hundred and seventeen in the Eleventh. But from the early part of the latter century the character of these pilgrimages changed. In earlier years they were usually undertaken by individuals who either travelled alone, or joined together in small groups. A Bishop of Constance in the early Tenth Century made the trip three times; in the same century S. John of Parma crossed the sea six times, and these but illustrate the earlier type of pilgrimage. Towards the end of that century, and in the first quarter of the next when the Hungarians had been won to Christianity, the easier road by way of the Danube Valley was made feasible, and in 1026 Richard, Abbot of S. Vanne, led seven hundred to Palestine. In 1033 Raoul Glaber reports a greater throng of pilgrims at the Holy Sepulchre than had ever been seen before. Two years later a Duke of Normandy, incongruously called Robert the Devil, took the road “with a multitude of his subjects”; eleven thousand pilgrims followed the Bishop of Bamberg in 1065.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> These Phrygian caps in the mosaics saved the Church of the Nativity from destruction at the hands of invading Persians who, in the early Seventh Century, overthrew many Syrian churches including that of the Holy Sepulchre. When they came to Bethlehem they were so pleased by the sight of their own national headdress on the Magi that they went their way, leaving the church unscathed. Thus an unknown artist of the Fourth Century, by placing Persian caps on the heads of the Wise Men, gave that protection which, three hundred years later, the armies of a great Empire under a great sovereign were unable to afford.

<sup>2</sup> James W. Thompson, *Economic and Social History of the Middle Ages*, pp. 385-8.



By the Eleventh Century conditions in Palestine, which do not appear to have been arduous prior to the year 1000, changed—if we may trust the accuracy of the stirring appeals made by Pope Urban and Peter the Hermit at Clermont when they summoned Western Christendom to protect those who were daily risking their lives for the privilege of praying at the holiest of shrines.

Important as pilgrimages were to life and art in early centuries they were even more so in the Twelfth and Thirteenth when all the roads were filled with pilgrims. Some threaded the dangerous passes of the Pyrenees on their way to Santiago da Compostela; others crossed the Alps to visit the famous shrines of Lucca and Rome, or of Monte Gargano and Bari. But whether they went East or West they found their route planned out for them by the Church with definite stages for each day's journey, and appointed stations for each night's rest.<sup>3</sup>

Along these roads came also the troubadours, the singers, players, actors, acrobats, and dancers to entertain the pilgrims when, their devotions accomplished, they came from the church into the little piazza that lay before its portals. Here the troubadour sang the stirring chansons de geste of their homeland; there the story-tellers related the fables of Æsop, the deeds of Alexander and the delightful, if risqué, story of the courtesan Campaspe and Aristotle; while the dancers and the acrobats competed for the praises and the pennies of the crowds.

<sup>3</sup> The pilgrims were not, however, always inspired by very holy purposes, nor was it always easy to distinguish the honest from the vagrant, for among their ranks there were occasional vagabond monks, runaway husbands, or wives taking an unadvertised vacation from home duties. In fact, going on a pilgrimage was a fairly popular method of wife-desertion, which explains the notice sent to their absent husbands by a group of Norman women that, if the fugitives did not soon return, they would find them married to other men.

For nearly seven hundred years Herod has been dining in a bas-relief on the façade of Rouen Cathedral with Herodias at his side while Salome dances on her hands, the Baptist kneels in his dungeon, and the royal executioner draws his sword. In the collegiate church of Semur and on a capital of S. Georges-Boscherville—this time accompanied by a harp and violin—the same inverted Salome dances to tempt the king and win the gory gift she craves.

These dancing figures are not rare; they may be found in many churches often, as at Modena and at Boscherville, accompanied by musicians. But why should this Salome with her feet in the air be so alluring, so seductive, to the heart of Herod?

Once more the answer is—the Roads, for when the pilgrims returned to their own country with tales to tell of their dangers and diversions, their perils and their pleasures, it appeared evident to the artists that nothing would have softened the heart of Herod more quickly than the dancing figure, waltzing on her hands, which had so charmed the pilgrims along the sacred roads. Therefore Rouen's Salome dances on her hands, clad in a skirt that defies the law of gravitation.

The bas-reliefs of the churches along these roads bring the life of past centuries vividly before us. At Fidenza we catch a glimpse of the pilgrims themselves; a man, a woman, and a child take their southward way led by an angel whom they cannot see, for he is separated from them by the width of a niche and the statue of a saint; on the other side of the portal the same group, with vows accomplished, return to their own land, still led by the invisible celestial guide. Around the corner of the church other pilgrims trudge along, some with hoods thrown back and all with staffs in hand, while the more for-

tunate ride their horses—although one has dismounted to let his dog sit uncertainly in the saddle and rest his feet.

These carvings not only show us the pilgrims who thronged these roads, they also tell us the tales by which they were entertained. Some of these were told by Æsop two thousand years before, for on a lintel of the cathedral at Modena two cocks bear a litter on which lies the seemingly dead body of a crafty fox who, with one eye open, is already gathering his muscles for the leap which will supply a bird for his dinner. Even so, said the Church, does the Father of Lies destroy those who, for one moment, relax their vigilance. That the story is taken from the teller of tales rather than from some ancient manuscript is evidenced by another bas-relief on the arch directly above this lintel. Here King Arthur and his knights—whose names, "Artus," "Idier," "Gauvain," and "Keu," are inscribed above their figures—ride against the castle of villainous Caradoc and his yet more evil mother to rescue a damosel and slay her ravisher.

This legend, celebrated in old French and Breton romances as well as in those of Wales, could only have reached Italy through the itinerant singers of France, and the two bas-reliefs over the same portal, one repeating a tale of Æsop and the other a saga of the Bretons, reveal the influences of the troubadours.

Even to the cities of Southern Italy, where the venturesome took ship for Palestine, the French troubadours carried their tales, as is witnessed by a mosaic of the Cathedral of Brindisi which, until destroyed by an earthquake in 1858, told the tale of Roland and of Roncesvalles.

Charlemagne, crowned with victory, had recrossed the Pyrenees after his campaign in Spain and entered France, leaving Roland in command of the rear guard with his friends Oliver, Gaultier, and Archbishop Turpin. But the traitor Ganelon be-

trayed the plans of Charlemagne to Marsilius, thereby enabling the Moslem hosts to surround the rear guard in the narrow Pyrenean pass, cutting off their advance as well as their retreat. Knowing that they must die that day Bishop Turpin urged Roland to sound his horn that Charlemagne, hearing in his distant tent, might at least rescue their bodies and give them honourable burial. And Roland blew so mighty a blast that the hills for thirty leagues around echoed with the call; the king heard and with all the might of France rode to the rescue, but even as he rode the unequal battle raged up and down the pass until Roland, mortally wounded, alone survived on a field whence the Saracens had fled. Sunset, then darkness above; silence and death below, and Charlemagne spurring through the night.

At Fidenza a worn carving relates the vanity of Alexander who, having quaffed at the Fountain of Youth and explored the depths of the sea, now lifted his eyes to heaven. To scale these heights, where none had ventured since Icarus dared and died, Alexander harnessed to his chariot two winged griffons, famished by a three days' fast, and by holding tempting morsels before their hungry eyes directed their upward flight for seven days until an angel barred the road to this new Balaam saying, "Why seek to know the things of heaven when you have not learned the things of earth?" Seeing in the story a symbol of man's pride, and a lesson for that science which would rend the veil to violate the mysteries of God, the Church adopted the legend and illustrated it in many places, in a mosaic at Otranto, in the bas-relief at S. Mark's in Venice and at Fidenza, among others.

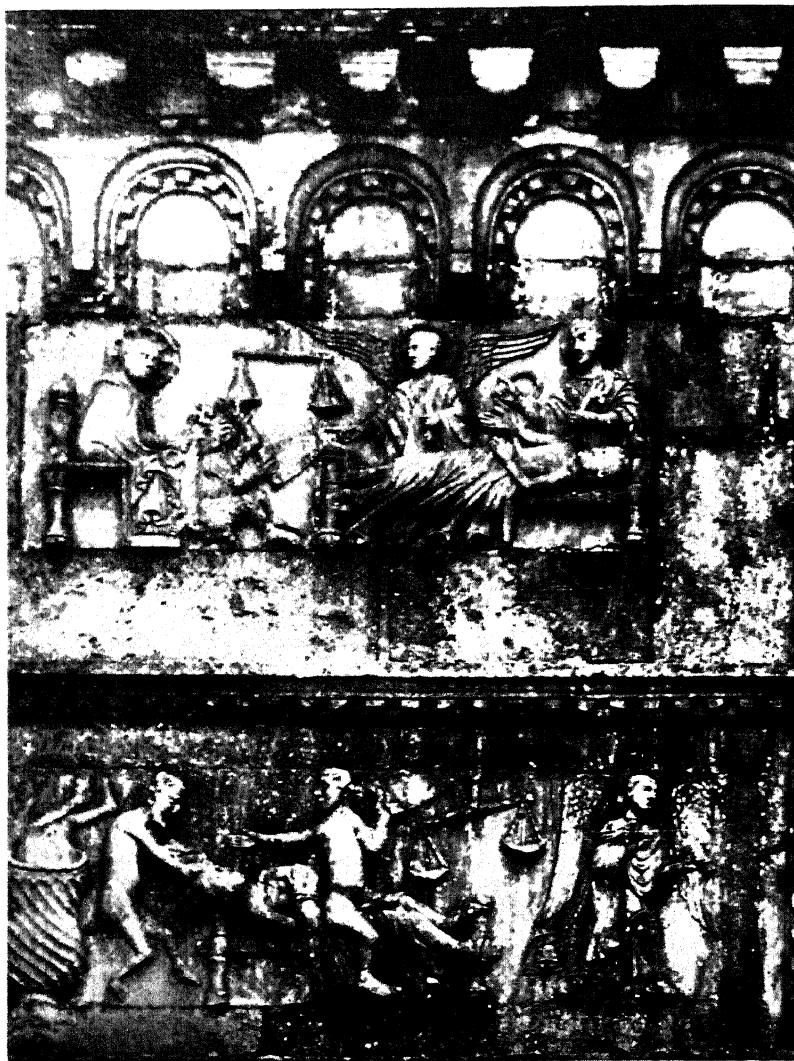
Since this story was told in the Third Century in Greek and in the Fourth Century in Latin, it might seem reasonable to assume that the Church received it from some manuscript, either derived or surviving from the days of the pseudo-Calisto-



*Durrieu: Les très riches heures, etc.*

#### THE JOURNEY OF THE MAGI: LATE GOTHIC

Behind the procession of Balthazar the Syrian, a realistic view of Paris. Ample witness to the movement towards humanism is borne by the magnificent miniatures in the



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#### THE LAST JUDGMENT: FAÇADE, SPOLETO CATHEDRAL

In the deathbed Judgment at Spoleto (1329) the scene is dramatized and humanized until dignity is lost. Above, a little demon tries to falsify the scales and S. Peter raps him over the head with his key. Below, the devils have won the soul; Michael leaves the room in despair, while one demon gleefully rides on the dead man's chest as the other drags him off by the hair to the gateway of Hell.

thenes of Egypt, or from those of Julius Valerius of Rome. But the figure of Arthur of Britain standing near that of Alexander in the mosaic of Otranto bears witness that the troubadours of France, who alone sang the epics of Britain, must likewise have brought to Italy the pleasant tale of Alexander which they knew well from the songs of their compatriot jongleurs, Alberic of Besançon and Alexander of Bernai.

If the pilgrims from France to Italy thus left their mark on Italian churches, the same pilgrims, returning to their own land, left the Italian imprint on those of France.

At Châteauneuf, at Sugères, at Parthenay-le-Vieux, and at Civray an equestrian figure tramples a prostrate dwarf beneath his horse's hoofs. This is copied from a statue of Marcus Aurelius trampling a barbarian under foot which stands today in front of the Capitol in Rome. From this statue (in 966) Peter, Prefect of Rome, was hung by the hair for rebellion against a pope, and before it, in 985, a Roman mob flung the corpse of the Antipope Boniface, murderer of two popes—one of whom he starved to death in the Castle of S. Angelo. As late as the Thirteenth Century a stone dwarf lay beneath the stoic Emperor's feet, doubtless a personification of the barbarian peoples he had conquered.

This statue, however, did not always stand before the Capitol, nor was it always recognized as that of Marcus Aurelius. Once it stood before the "Mother of Churches"—S. John Lateran—where it was revered as the statue of Constantine, the first Christian Emperor, with paganism prostrate underneath his feet. It was only in the days of Paul III, when Michelangelo whispered in the papal ear that pilgrims were paying undeserved honours to a persecutor of the faith, that Marcus Aurelius regained possession of his own steed and statue. For many centuries before

that the faithful, visiting the shrines of Rome, had stopped to pay homage to the statue, thinking to honour him who had raised the Church from persecution to power, from poverty to wealth; and when they returned to France they brought his memory with them. So it came to pass that, here or there, on the façades of French churches, abbeys, or cathedrals, Marcus Aurelius reappeared trampling barbarians beneath his feet, but recognized and revered as Constantine, victorious over paganism.

Another statue that influenced the churches of both France and England was that of the Santo Volto, or "Saint Vou," and many pilgrims, turning aside from the direct road to Rome or to Bari, crossed the Apennines by way of Mt. Bardon to offer their prayers before the shrine at Lucca.

Neither war nor wealth but only the grace of God, guiding a ship that sailed without passengers or crew until it grounded gently on the coasts of Tuscany, brought this image to the church of Lucca. Those who boarded the mysterious vessel found on it only a figure of Christ crucified, carved in wood, which they brought reverently to their priests. After long deliberation the clergy of Lucca decided that this was the work of Nicodemus who, having begged the body of Jesus from Pilate and laid it in the grave, undertook to reproduce the face of Christ as he had seen Him dying upon Calvary; but the task was beyond all human skill. At last, wearied and discouraged, Nicodemus fell asleep before the uncompleted image and, as he slept, an angel came from Heaven to complete the task, thus giving to the world a divinely executed figure of the dying Christ as the Syrian conceived Him—mature in years, bearded, and wearing a long robe which fell to the nails that pierced His feet.

Once established in Lucca so many came to kiss the feet of the holy image that the priests were forced to protect them with



silver slippers. One day a jongleur, having played his violin till sunset in the piazza without receiving a single sou, entered the church and—as his service of worship—played his very best upon his strings. Then, miracle of miracles, the Christ, freeing for a moment His feet from the nails, tossed a silver slipper to the suppliant.

That the pilgrims carried the memory of the “Saint Vou” back with them the oaths of William Rufus of England testify, for he swore fidelity to his pledges “by Saint Vou.”

A bas-relief at Langford, near Oxford in England, which reproduces the Christ of Lucca may be explained by little leaden images of the Luccan crucifix, found in the waters of the Port of Wissant where pilgrims disembarked on their return from Rome. Amiens also has a replica, an image which bowed its head when the relics of S. Honoré were carried by. There were formerly many other such images in the churches of England and of Northern Europe but, since they did not conform to the accepted tradition of Christ’s appearance on the cross and doubtless shocked the clergy of the Renaissance, one by one they disappeared; today it is only in such remote villages as those of the valleys of the Pyrenees, whose inhabitants still clung to old manners and old customs, that copies of the Italian Christ have been preserved.

The image of Lucca, when it came to villages whose people had not visited the shrines of Italy, demanded an explanation from the imagination which the reason could not give. Interpreting this bearded figure with the long robe falling to the feet and fastened by a girdle at the waist as that of a bearded woman, they created a new saint—S. Wilgeforte—to explain the statue. S. Wilgeforte, they said, was a Christian in secret, the daughter of a Portuguese sovereign who knew not Christ. Plunged into

the depths of despair when her royal father, whom neither tears nor prayers could move, pledged her hand in marriage to a pagan prince, she turned to God, entreating Him for the gift of an ugly-



S. WILGEFORTE

This legendary female bearded saint was the result of a misunderstanding of the archaic Crucifix at Lucca, the Santo Volto. (From G. G. Coulton, *Art and the Reformation*.)

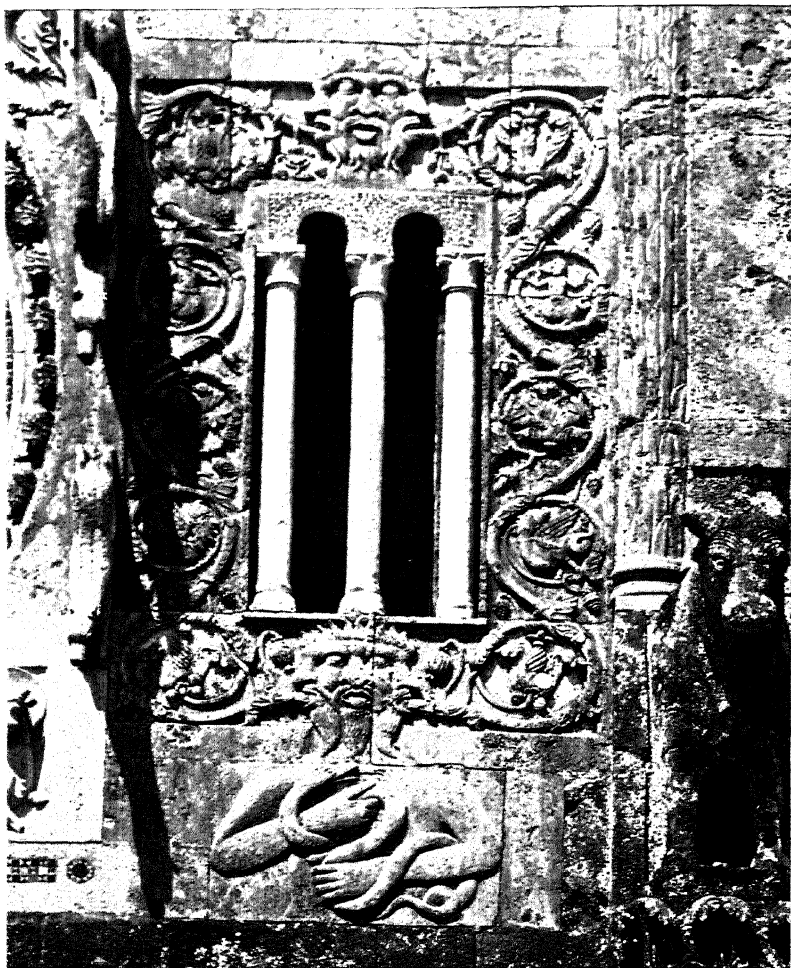
ness so great that the prince would not desire her. The prayer was heard; a beard began to grow swiftly upon her chin and cheek until she had all the semblance of a man despite her woman's raiment. Thereupon the prince took hasty flight and the king, filled with wrath, nailed her to a cross. In this manner did the people of some districts of rural Europe, unfamiliar with



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#### THE SANTO VOLTO, LUCCA CATHEDRAL

The dying Christ as the Syrian conceived Him. Traditionally the work of Nicodemus and an angel, this famous woodcarving made Lucca a centre of mediaval pilgrimage and gave rise, through imaginative explanation, to the legend of the bearded female martyr S. Wilgeforte.



SATAN: FAÇADE, S. PIETRO, TOSCANELLA

*Alinari*

This is Romanesque work of the Twelfth Century; a striking contrast to the humanized Spoleto demons two hundred years later. From the mouths of the triple-headed Evil One above, bestial temptations flow to be consumed by the Satan beneath, who cherishes the serpent.

the Christ of Lucca and of Syria, explain the bearded face, the long robe, and the girdled waist of the image which had been carved in wood by the hands of Nicodemus and an angel. That S. Wilgeforte is really descended from the Tuscan statue is evidenced by the tale told of the saint: that she had once cast her silver slipper to a suppliant as he played before her on his violin—a tale already associated with the Christ of Lucca.<sup>4</sup>

The roads also had some influence upon the architecture.

The Italian church, for instance, knew nothing of the carved tympanum—that arched area immediately above the portal where, in France, so many stories of the Bible were told in bas-relief. In Italy, on the other hand, the portals of churches sometimes resemble the plain, rectangular doorway of Roman days; or again a window, or a fresco, take the place of the French tympanum—except along the Via Francigena. Only along this road, travelled by countless pilgrim feet, and in the churches that border it, do the sculptured tympana of France appear to bear witness to the influence of the Pilgrim Way.

In other ways still these roads left their imprint upon the churches across the Alps. As the Crusaders had brought the round church to Germany, France, and England, so now pilgrims to the shrine of S. Michael on Monte Gargano brought the memory of his subterranean chapel back to France, and Mont S. Michel in Normandy—"S. Michel-in-Peril-of-the-Sea"—bears the indelible seal of that dark cavern on the heights overlooking the Adriatic where the great archangel had left the imprint of his foot.

<sup>4</sup> The veneration of S. Wilgeforte soon spread, under various names, to many parts of Europe. Before her statue in S. Paul's, London, women once offered oats for deliverance from an abusive, or a boresome, husband; and she still has her altar in a little church near the Abbey of S. Wandrille-Rançon in Normandy.

In the year 492 terrified peasants reported to their bishop of Sipontum that, while seeking a wandering bull in the dark forests of Apulia, they had been suddenly confronted by the archangel S. Michael himself in the woods of Monte Gargano. A little later the bishop also received a vision wherein he was commanded to erect an altar to S. Michael on the spot where the peasants had seen the revelation of his glory. When the obedient bishop climbed the heights he found a cavern with an altar, raised not by human but by angelic hands, with the imprint of S. Michael's foot beside it.

Few of the pilgrims who came to Otranto or to Bari failed to visit this famous shrine on whose threshold they read the warning, "*Terribilis est iste locus.*" Hither came Otto III of Germany, to expiate the murder of Crescentius; and Henry II, also of Germany, to be rewarded by a vision; hither came also many holy men—S. Odo of Cluny, S. Gerard, S. Bernard, and a host of less distinguished pilgrims who, returning to their own lands, carried with them stories of the mighty miracles wrought at the holy shrine of S. Michael and little images representing the saint slaying the dragon, for the monk Bernard, a pilgrim of the Ninth Century, says explicitly that the holy grotto contained such an image of the archangel. Although this image has long since disappeared, those that took its place almost certainly reproduced the earlier form.

Two hundred years after the first Mass had been said in the Apulian Cavern the story of Monte Gargano reappears in Normandy; again a wandering bull reveals the holy site; again a bishop, now of Avranches instead of Sipontum, receives commandment in a vision to honour the archangel with an altar, wherefore S. Aubert, aided by a miracle, hewed a cavern on the summit of a height overlooking the sea which, says an old manu-

script in the library of Avranches, "Reproduced the form of the cavern of Monte Gargano." Thus the pilgrims brought back from Italy to France the memories of a mountain shrine to which we owe not merely the Norman Mont S. Michel but that of another S. Michael on the coasts of Cornwall, a chapel of S. Michel on a needle of rock at Le Puy, and still another in Rocamadour. To the pilgrims also we owe the countless images in bas-relief or in glass wherein the archangel slays the dragon with the thrust of his lance.

So in many ways—ways that are only illustrated here—the Pilgrim Roads moulded the art and the architecture of Western churches; over these roads the troubadours brought the tales, the romances, and the songs of France to take form amid the bas-reliefs of Italian basilicas; and over these roads the returning pilgrims brought to France the good S. Nicholas of Bari, protector of children, the cave of S. Michael, the Christ of Lucca, and the earliest of equestrian statues to decorate her cathedrals and her abbeys.

By these roads Rome gave to Palestine her basilicas, and France her swords to guard them; while Syria gave to Rome and to France the wealth of her traditions, the austere Christ who appears at Lucca, and even the cross itself, which did not begin to appear freely in Western art until after the great discovery of the Empress Helena.

LOUIS BRÉHIER, *L'Art Chrétien*, p. 56.

JAMES W. THOMPSON, *Social and Economic History of the Middle Ages*.

ÉMILE MÂLE, Vol. I, Chap. VII.





## Part Four

### THE RENAISSANCE PERIOD



## Chapter Sixteen

### THE BACKGROUND OF FOURTEENTH AND FIFTEENTH CENTURY ART

FRIAR TUCK, fat and full-faced, able to quaff a full flagon, to sing a lusty song, to receive as well as give a hearty blow, often robbing Peter who walked in velvets but readily sharing his illicit gains with threadbare and hungry Paul, could be understood and well liked throughout the country-side in England—except by the bishops and abbots of the Church. But Tuck the Cleric, also fat and full of face, who lived softly but walked roughly, who robbed not only Peter but also Paul and all the rest of the apostles to supply his table and his concubine, shared less well the general favour. However, perhaps neither Tuck the Friar nor Tuck the Cleric were wholly to blame, for if the events of the Twelfth Century forced the Friar to refuge in the greenwood, those of the Fourteenth Century made it easy for the Cleric to walk the streets of Avignon or of Rome in an even greater lawlessness.

To trace the history of the Church from the abdication of Pope Celestine V in 1294 to the deposition of John XXIII by the Council of Constance in 1415 is not a pleasant task, for the crimes and vices of popes and prelates cast heavy shadows on the path. Statesmen like Machiavelli, historians like Guicciardini, loyal Catholics like S. Catherine of Siena and S. Brigitte of Sweden, and writers like Boccaccio, Petrarch, or Dante were bit-

ter in their attacks on those followers of the Lamb who had the appetites of wolves.

They charge the papal Court at Avignon with "boundless avarice and blind ambition"; they lay the guilt of simony at the door of the Curia in Rome, where "everything is bought or sold." The fact that repeated decrees forbade Roman priests to operate brothels partially explains Machiavelli's lament that "the evil ensample of the papal Court has robbed Italy of all piety and religion."<sup>1</sup>

It would, however, be neither just nor scholarly to fail to recognize the unbroken succession of high-minded clergy who, even though they were in the minority, maintained throughout these years the "faith once delivered to the saints." "Apart from the Roman Curia and the convents there existed a hierarchy of able and God-fearing men who, by the sanctity of their lives, the gravity of their doctrines, their ministry to the sick and relief of the poor, kept alive the ideal of a religion pure and undefiled."<sup>2</sup>

These "protestants" within the Church gained force after the late Fifteenth Century when they were reinforced by such men as Cardinal Pole of England, Cardinals Contarini, Fregoso, Caraffa, Sadoletto, Bishop Giberti of Verona, and Gaetano, founder of the Theatines, an order which undertook the reformation of the Church by the impact of well-ordered lives.

The moral decline within the Church, to which so many contemporary witnesses bear testimony, was directly related to the tragic events of the Fourteenth Century. First in order came the abdication of Pope Celestine V in 1294—two years after his election—an act which struck a heavy blow at the belief that the

<sup>1</sup> J. A. Symonds, *Age of the Despots*, p. 459.

<sup>2</sup> J. A. Symonds, *op. cit.*, p. 470.

Conclave, in its selection of a pope, was inspired and guided by the Holy Spirit. If a pope thus chosen could confess his temperamental, if not moral, unfitness for his office and resign, one of two conclusions seemed inevitable: either the Holy Spirit shared man's liability to error, or else He had been unable to guide the Conclave in its choice. In either event the prestige of both Conclave and Papacy were undermined. To some, especially to the Ghibellines of Italy, the act seemed so damnable that Dante did not hesitate to plunge Celestine's soul into the first circle of the Inferno, for it is probable that the poet had the pope in mind when he wrote in the First Canto that just within the gates of Hell he met

"The shade of him

Who made, through cowardice, the great refusal."

Another blow, and a savage one, fell upon the Church in 1309 when Clement V removed the papal Court from Rome to Avignon. Whatever the reasons for the transfer, it deprived the pope of the power to appeal to the conscience of Europe as an impartial arbitrator between kings, as a judge who held just scales before the nations. For the following seventy years, while this "Babylonian Captivity" endured, the Papacy was regarded as an appanage of the French Crown, and the pope as a vassal of the House of Valois.

The influence of the Church, and her hold on the affections of the people, were still further weakened by the heavy burdens of taxation which she imposed upon a world already weighted by the wastes and costs of the Hundred Years' War. Both France and England, hard pressed for financial means to carry on the struggle, severely taxed the incomes of the Church whose losses of revenue, due to the war, had been very great. Monasteries

had been destroyed, churches sacked, gutted, and burned; church lands had been abandoned and their fields left untilld; commerce had been ruined. On every side the finances of the Church had been impaired while her expenses had increased; the maintenance of the court at Avignon, the upkeep of more than a score of cardinals, each with his palace, his multitudes of officials, secretaries, servitors, friends, and relatives demanded enormous sums. Old taxes were therefore more rigorously exacted, and new ones were imposed. Simony and nepotism were rampant; every office had its price. Dietrich of Nien, or Nicholas of Clemanges, churchmen of the day, testify that "Freely ye have received, freely give is now most vilely perverted. 'Freely have I not received, nor will I freely give, for I bought my bishopric at a great price and must indemnify myself for my unprofitable outlay.'"<sup>3</sup>

A popular parody appeared in Paris, *The Beginning of the Gospel According to the Silver Mark*, the author sailing very near the coasts of sacrilege and blasphemy as he contrasted, in phrases that imitated those of Holy Writ, the reception in Rome of a rich cleric who had committed murder with that accorded one who was poor and who, coming for charity, was driven from the doors of the Curia with the words ringing in his ears "Get thee behind me, Satan, for thou savourest not the things that be of pelf."<sup>4</sup>

Again the Church suffered, as did all States, from the ravages of the Black Death which began in 1348 to take so heavy a toll of human life that often the living were too few to bury the dead. What the actual losses were we shall never know; cold statistics could not be preserved by witnesses whose memories

<sup>3</sup> E. P. Cheney, *Dawn of a New Era*, Chapter VI.

<sup>4</sup> Helen Waddell, *The Wandering Scholars*, p. 150.

had been so shaken by the horrors of the years. Estimates of the mortality vary from twenty-five to fifty per cent—in some localities they rise to eighty per cent. Among the uncounted thousands who fell victims to the plague were far too many of the best-trained and most experienced administrators in both Church and State. Those who were hurriedly called upon to fill the vacant posts often had neither the ability nor the moral character to discharge their duties honestly and efficiently; with the intrusion of these myriads of the mentally or morally unfit, corruption spread through both the ecclesiastical and the secular bureaucratic worlds.

The confusions of the times were immeasurably increased in 1378 when the cardinals who had elected Urban VI to the Papacy reconvened at Fondi and declared him deposed from his office. If a pope could not only abdicate, as Celestine V had done, but could be deposed by the Conclave after his election, what part had the Holy Spirit played in the deliberations, and to what extent must He share in the Conclave's error of judgment?

But the attempted deposition of Urban was far more important than the shadows it threw upon both pope and Conclave, for Urban refused to accept the action of his cardinals or to make way for Clement VII who had been chosen to fill his place. Thereafter, until the Council of Constance deposed John XXIII on fifty-four undefended charges, leaving unpressed sixteen others which alleged moral depravities lest contempt for the man should fall upon his holy office, the "seamless robe of Christ" was rent in twain. One pope reigned in Avignon, another in Rome. Later a third, elected by a clerical faction, held his shadowy court first in Perpignan and then in Spanish Valencia. Cathedra was thus opposed to cathedra. Excommunications flowed across

the Pyrenees from Peñiscola, passing en route other excommunications coming from Rome. One Holy Father in Italy cursed another in Spain, while he of Valencia, in full canonicals, cried "Come down" to his brother in the Vatican.

The inevitable result of such dissensions and divisions was the destruction of man's age-old refuge in the authority of his once venerated priests; now no man knew where to turn for comfort or for counsel; guides once trusted had become blind, and men—troubled and perplexed—turned increasingly from distrusted priests to such mystical heretics as the Cistercian Abbot Joachim of Floris, whom the Council of Arles in 1260 condemned for heresy but whom Dante placed in Paradise. True, Joachim lived in the late Eleventh Century, but his influence came to its full flowering in the Fourteenth Century. Nor did Joachim stand alone; mystics, some of doubtful orthodoxy, arose. Heresies multiplied until the cloud of the Protestant Reformation began to spread along the whole horizon line.

Still another, more subtle but not less seriously subversive, force came, first in Italy but a century later spreading across the Alps, from the growing spirit of paganism. From the cities of the Lombard Plain to Brindisi prelates and laymen were neglecting their gospels for the study of the writers of the Classic age. So deeply was the influence of pagan thought infecting the cultured Italian world that a commission, appointed by Paul III (1534-1549), took serious notice of the spread of irreligious teachings, not only in the universities but also in the utterances of the preachers from the pulpits.

The spiritual losses of the century are sometimes curiously illustrated by the attitude of the Italian towards the Church; he continued to accept the authority of the Pope when he spoke as the Vicegerent of God although he might despise him as a



man and refuse to obey him as the temporal head of the Estates of the Church. Machiavelli relates that Vitellozzo Vitelli, while being strangled by Cesare Borgia's bravo, begged hard that the father of his murderer, the horrible Alexander VI, might be entreated to pronounce his absolution. Cellini, on his knees, implored Pope Clement VII to absolve him from the guilt of homicide and theft, yet spoke of him as transformed to a savage beast by an access of fury. At one time he trembled before the awful majesty of Christ's Vicar as revealed in Paul III, at another he reviled him as a man "who neither believed in God nor in any other article of religion."

Pietro Paolo Boscoli, executed for attempted assassination in 1513, hardly able to remember the words of a single prayer, faced death with a courage that he drew from the pagan philosophers, not from the gospels. Even these failed him, however, when—ignorant of the nearness of the hour of his execution—he ate heartily of food that the jailers had placed before him. The crime of attempted murder did not trouble him, but he feared lest his appetite should have cost him Paradise. "Sono troppo carico di cibo, ed ho mangiato cose insalate: in modo che non mi pare poter unir lo spirito a Dio." He is too heavy with food; wherefore he cannot join his spirit with God. His jailers have not been fair, they should have warned him: "O indiscrezione!"<sup>5</sup>

So that which should have been first became last, and the little things became great.

The decline of the Church in both faith and morals left less of an imprint upon the art of the cathedral than it would have done a century earlier, for after the invention of printing "the illustrated book spread among the faithful the moral teaching which the Church had hitherto provided." "The Gothic

<sup>5</sup> J. A. Symonds, *Age of the Despots*, p. 467.

sun," wrote Victor Hugo, "set behind the gigantic printing presses of Mayence." "Along the margins of the Book of Hours of Simon Vostre those subjects were unfolded which, till this time, had been written for the worshippers in the carvings of the cathedral's porch. The fragile little book that could be printed in a day was soon to replace the great book of stone which required a century for its writing. However, the former monumental art was not forced to any immediate abdication; for many years, until the middle of the Sixteenth Century, the medallions of the windows and the bas-reliefs of the portals continued to place before the eyes of men their duties and their destinies."<sup>6</sup>

From this time forth we shall trace the iconography of the cathedral, which we have now followed from its beginnings in pre-Christian art to the lofty certainties of the Gothic age, as it declines through the neo-paganism of the Renaissance to its obscuration in the purer paganism of the late Seventeenth Century when the carvings of Notre-Dame had become as meaningless as the hieroglyphics on Egyptian monuments, and when Stendhal, writing in the early Nineteenth Century, thought that "the subjects offered the artists by Christianity are either odious or, at the best, insipid."

The conviction is forced upon us at the very threshold of this period that the artist has lost the sense of dignity, the appreciation of the sublime. This is by no means universal; no sculptor of any generation ever conceived the Christ in terms more impressive, more moving, or more gripping to the heart than did those who carved, for the Church of Venizy in Yonne or of S. Nizier in Troyes, the figure of Christ crowned with thorns, hands and feet still bound, seated on a rock of Calvary, watching and waiting as the executioners made ready to nail Him to the

<sup>6</sup> Émile Mâle, Vol. III, p. 295.

cross. Nor could there be any deeper expression of the essence of Christianity than that given by an unknown priest, who had evidently often stood on guard over the bedsides of dying men, when he wrote his *Ars Moriendi—The Art of Dying*.<sup>7</sup>

On the other hand the infant Jesus who once sat on His mother's knee, one hand raised in benediction, the other holding the round globe of the world He came to save, becomes, in the valley of the Loire, a little peasant of Touraine. Instead of the serious child of early years, burdened with the greatness of His destiny, He becomes a very human little baby, toying with a fruit, a flower, or with a little golden harp that angels have brought for His amusement. Sometimes He lies naked on the ground, sucking His thumb; angels wheel Him in a primitive baby carriage, or guide His first tottering steps as He essays to walk. In a Fourteenth Century drawing He straddles a wooden hobby-horse and gallops around the nursery floor. In like manner the Virgin descends from her throne above the stars to become a Burgundian mother, swaddling her child according to the custom of that country, or—at S. Urbain of Troyes—a young Champenoise whose chubby offspring smiles as He plays with a bunch of grapes. It is difficult to see in these babies of peasant stock, or in their mothers, the Eternal Word in the arms of the Mother of God.

Rarely, however, is this loss of the appreciation of the sublime more evident than in a bas-relief of the Last Judgment, carved on the façade of the Church of S. Pietro in the little Italian hill town of Spoleto. Let us first recall to mind the tense solemnity of the scene at Amiens where, beneath the throne of Christ, S. Michael holds the scales, weighing the sins of a soul, not

<sup>7</sup> Émile Mâle, Vol. III, pp. 381 ff.

against its merits but against the Lamb of God; or at Bourges where a hideous head occupies one side of the balance while a chalice—the blood of Christ—weighs down the other. Not by our merits shall we be saved, but only by the Sacrifice of Christ; so the Church believed and the artists taught in the Thirteenth Century. With the scenes of the Last Day as presented at Amiens and Bourges in mind, we may better understand the witness of Spoleto as it testifies to all that the years have lost.

High on the wall to the left of the entrance to S. Pietro the artist has carved his conception of the Judgment Scene; to him this weighing of the soul comes, not at the end of time when the dead throw off their gravestones and rise to meet their God, but in the very chamber of the dying. Beside the bed stands the angel with the scales; at its head and foot a saint is sitting, each holding a heavy key—perhaps one holds the key to Heaven, the other the key to Hell. Between each saint and the dying man a little devil crouches, he at the foot attempts to falsify the scales by giving the balance nearest him an upward thrust of his thumb; it is not the first time that devils have tried to trick the angel with the scales, but throughout the Thirteenth Century S. Michael gives no heed, for he knows that the scales themselves are just and will allow no falsification of their verdict. At Spoleto, however, the saint at the bed's foot admonishes the little misbehaviourist by rapping him over the head with his massive key, whereupon the imp turns his head to scowl at his monitor.

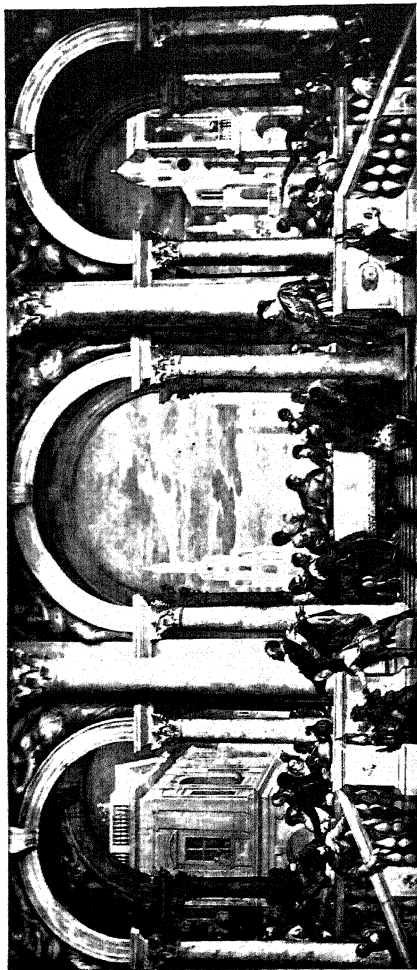
Immediately below this bas-relief the story is concluded. The devils have won; the saints have left the chamber and the angel, with a gesture of despair, is following. One little demon rides gleefully on the dead man's chest as the other drags him by the hair of his head over the foot of the bed towards a caldron, the gateway to Hell, where the feet and legs of another lost soul



*Princeton Univ. Lib'y.*

# THE BURNING BUSH: AIX, FIFTEENTH CENTURY

A primitive by Nicholas Froment. Moses, represented with a wealth of anachronistic detail, tends Jethro's sheep beside the River Rhône. In the distance, Beaucaire and Tarascon.



*Princeton Univ. Lib'ry.*

# CHRIST AT THE FEAST IN THE HOUSE OF LEVI

By Paolo Veronese (Sixteenth Century). The Renaissance love of lavishness reduced the biblical scene to an unimportant, though central, episode in a spirited pageant of Venetian luxury.

are disappearing. To such buffooneries have the lofty conceptions of the Thirteenth Century been degraded.

Just once more. In the days of Wycliffe (1324-1384) a representation of the Trinity as a Being with one head but three faces



THE TRINITY AND THE FOUR EVANGELISTS

Such symbolic representations of the Trinity, as this in a Book of Hours printed in Paris in 1524, were considered unorthodox by many of the later theologians. (From G. G. Coulton, *Art and the Reformation*.)

had become sufficiently common to call for his vigorous condemnation. The judgment of the great heretic was repeated by an Archbishop of Florence in the middle of the Fifteenth Century, by Jan Molanus of the University of Leyden in 1568, and by Pope Urban VIII in 1628 who also commanded that all such existing representations should be burned. However, it would ap-

pear that the offence continued, for in 1745 Pope Benedict XIV felt it necessary to issue anew the papal condemnations.

That men also conceived the existence of a Trinity of Evil is evidenced by Dante who, in the first years of the Fourteenth Century, portrayed Satan as he saw him when, with Virgil as his guide, he entered the last and lowest of the cycles of Hell.

"I beheld three faces on his head!  
The one in front, and that vermillion was.  
Two were the others that were joined with this  
About the middle part of either shoulder.  
The right one seemed 'twixt white and yellow;  
The left was such to look upon as those  
Who come from where the Nile falls valley-ward."

(That is, towards Ethiopia; wherefore this face was black.)

"With six eyes did he weep, and down three chins  
Trickled the tear drops and the bloody drivel.  
At each mouth he with his teeth was crunching  
A sinner in the manner of a brake  
So that he three of them tormented thus." <sup>8</sup>

The vision of Dante doubtless reflects the popular conception of the Lord of the Lost, for this Satan with three faces appears not merely in the miniatures of the time, but also in the Campo Santo of Pisa where Orcagna painted a horned and hairy Satan, clad in armour, tearing souls with his teeth in two of his three mouths, while the third drips blood. Orcagna has made Satan's body sufficiently transparent to enable us to follow other tortured souls as they pass through a digestive tract that is scorched by leaping flames until a little black devil receives them in his arms and passes them down to the fires of hell.

<sup>8</sup> Longfellow's translation.



The conception, as Landor says of Dante's vision, "is atrocious, not terrific or grand." It implies an attempt to terrify the minds of men through their eyes as the Inquisition was attempting to frighten them through fear for their bodies. Having lost the affections and the confidence of men the Church would seek to drive all alienated believers back to a hypocritical allegiance by means of the Holy Office, or through the terrors that such portrayals as this by Orcagna in the cemetery of Pisa might arouse.

Long before Orcagna's day, however, far back towards the beginnings of the Twelfth Century, another artist carved a very different conception of this triple-faced Satan on the façade of the Church of S. Pietro at Toscanella, near Viterbo, the modern Tuscania.

Here, on the right of the wheel window that stands above the central portal, is an oblong, unglazed opening divided by two columns into three parts. Above this panel is carved a strong and massive head, full of intelligence, powerful, and utterly evil. It has three faces, one seen from the front, the other two in profile. The hair leaps like dancing flames, as it does in all representations of Satan throughout the Twelfth Century—e.g., at Vézelay and at Autun. From the central mouth scrolls descend on either side of the open panel to vanish in the mouth of another triple-faced Satan below, who is here visible from the waist up, holding a serpent clutched tightly to his breast. As these scrolls descend they curve to enclose little images of monsters, each with the head of a man, the tail of a serpent, but with the body of a bird here, or of a beast there; with the claws of the one or the talons of the other. The interpretation is not difficult; here is a Satan who chills the blood; keen in intellect, dreadful in power,

merciless in evil, with bestial temptations flowing from his mouth.

The artist is unknown, but neither Dante nor Orcagna ever conceived an image that could strike such terror to the heart, for the Satan of Toscanella has a dignity, a force, an impressiveness of evil that is wholly lacking in the nightmare that the great Ghibelline saw in the last pit of the *Inferno*, or in the atrocity that the Florentine painted on the walls of Pisa's "Holy Field."<sup>9</sup>

But not by dread, not by fear, does He who died that men might fear no more gather the souls of men. In S. John's vision the Gates of Heaven close on those who walked in terror of their God. It is "the fearful" who lead the way to exile; the unbelieving, the abominable, murderers, idolaters, and all liars follow as they who are less guilty.<sup>10</sup>

The Inquisition, Dante's Devil, the Satans of Orcagna and of Toscanella were not least among the voices that called forth the Reformation; that arrayed the grace of God against the Holy Office.

<sup>9</sup> For a description of the Church of S. Pietro at Toscanella see Rivoira, *Lombardic Architecture*, Vol. I, pp. 121-136. For the triple-headed Satan, see J. Charles Wall, *Devils*, pp. 27-28, also 71-72.

<sup>10</sup> Revelation xxi. 8.

E. P. CHENEY, *Dawn of a New Era*, Chap. VII.

J. A. SYMONDS, *Age of the Despots*, Chaps. VII, VIII, and IX.

HELEN WADDELL, *The Wandering Scholars*, pp. 150 ff.

## Chapter Seventeen

### PRE-RENAISSANCE ART

THE Church of the later Twelfth and early Thirteenth Centuries might well have taken to heart Æsop's fable of the contest between the Sun and the Wind; when the latter had been unable, by his utmost force, to tear the mantle from a peasant's shoulders, the Sun so bathed him in the warmth of his rays that the man gladly laid aside his cloak. Not all the wealth and power of the Church, at their peak in the days of the great Innocent (1198-1216), could compel respect for priests whose avarice was passing into a proverb, or reverence for prelates, too many of whom had climbed, one by one, the rungs of the ladder of simony.

Moreover, since preaching was not then a function of the Church, since, in theory at least, only bishops might enter the pulpit and many of these, being merely feudal barons, were unfitted by education and even more by inclination for the task of public speaking, the clergy were unable to utilize the great influence of the spoken word to warm the hearts or to quicken the enthusiasms of the people. The Church could threaten and even punish, for she held the keys to Heaven and to Hell, but she had no key that would open the hearts of men. In fact the very power of the Church had its Achilles' heel—for the high authority which enabled Innocent to place whole nations under interdict, to silence the voices of all churches, to deny to millions of the innocent the sacramental rites—comfort for the dying,

burial for the dead, the saving grace of baptism to infants—sowed seeds of resentment that ultimately flowered in rebellion. Even in Innocent's day hydra-headed heresy was striking at the Church in many lands, not sparing cities that lay within the shadow of the Vatican itself. Until the coming of S. Francis of Assisi the conflict was uneven, for a voiceless Church could not compete with eloquent heresy, and the warm oratory, the fervid preaching, of such heretics as Henry the Deacon, Peter de Bruys, and Peter Waldo, with many others, led thousands in every land to lay aside, and passively resist, ecclesiastical authority. The clergy themselves had barbed the arrows of their assailants, for the arrogance and avarice of the priests, their pride, greed, and misuse of power—corruptions which pope after pope lamented and which even the great Innocent confessed himself impotent to check—lent wings and stings to the invectives of the heretics.

The heresies of the day were primarily anti-clerical and anti-sacerdotal rather than speculative or theological, wherefore they made the greater appeal to men who were weary of their priests. From town to town, city to city, and valley to valley the itinerant heretics made their way, preaching in the fields, the market places, and the city gates, stirring the deepest chambers of the hearts of men with their biting invectives, their scornful and fiery eloquence. They contrasted the prelates who lived softly and walked proudly with the simplicities of apostolic days until all Europe felt the stirrings of revolt. Men and women left their churches to gather in the open fields in England, Belgium, Germany, France, and Lombardy; indeed Italy itself felt and responded to the call; even Viterbo, deep within the papal territory, threatened to leave the ancient ways and to follow new masters. Here or there the people refused their bishop's blessing; "We have a father, a bishop, far above thee in wisdom, dignity,

and holiness," they cried to Bishop Hildebert when he returned to his diocese of Le Mans from Rome. S. Bernard, called upon in desperation to reclaim the people of the Midi to their allegiance, found "the churches without people, the people without priests, and the priests without respect."

Into a world so divided and harassed by heretics, many of whom were illiterate, some being also not above reproach in the conduct of their daily lives, but who spoke with conviction, with fire and with force, came the gentle, persuasive influence of Francis, son of a wealthy cloth merchant of Assisi. "Christianity was dead," said Machiavelli, "until Francis called it from the tomb."

Like another honoured saint, Augustine, the youth of Francis had been lightly spent in self-indulgencies and flippancies until an illness brought him face to face with death. The changes wrought by this sobering experience were not immediate; for two years the battle raged within his heart. One day Francis exchanged his rich garments for a mendicant's rags and sat begging in the market place till sunset; on the evening of another day he sat enthroned, a Lord of Misrule presiding over a riotous banquet.

He leaps from his horse to embrace a leper and to give away the contents of his heavy purse; but then he gets a new purse and prepares to ride in shining armour under Walter of Brienne, one of the great military leaders of the time—"I know I shall become a great Prince," he cried as he started for the camp at Brindisi. But another sickness, contracted on this road, turned Francis definitely from de Brienne to Jesus. Returning to Assisi he broke with his old associates, even with his family, and gave himself to the virtues of humility and poverty, to the service of the people, to the ministry to the sick and poor. But he went

against the corruptions of the Church and the champions of heresy as David went against Goliath of Gath—without sword or armour. His weapons were infinite gentleness, love for Christ and devotion for men. By the sheer purity of his life, by a spirit of service which not only called men brethren but lived towards them in brotherhood, asking nothing, giving everything, Francis restored to Christianity the terrific force of the simplicity of Christ Himself. Therefore the heresies, which had long withstood the utmost power of the Church, which had invaded even Assisi itself, began to give ground before the strange and unaccustomed power of a simple life.

With S. Francis and his contemporary, S. Dominic, the Church began to fight the heretics with their own weapons, for the Franciscans and the Dominicans went forth, as the Waldensian missionaries had been going, on foot, without scrip or purse, to the towns, villages, and valleys of every land.

Three men stand out in the mists of the later Middle Ages, men of equal conviction, consecration, purity of life, and devotion to Christ—Peter Waldo of Lyons, S. Francis of Assisi, and Girolamo Savonarola of Ferrara and Florence. Yet to two of them, to S. Francis and to Savonarola, we owe ideas that were to darken the spirituality of the Church's art. Here is the story.

To S. Francis the life of Jesus, like His influence, could know no limits of time or space; the stories of the Gospels belonged to every age, to every generation, to every city or village. Christians should conceive the events in the life of Christ as perpetually recurrent and should themselves share in them as witnesses or actors through a disciplined imagination and by hours spent in devout meditation. Therefore the scenes of the Gospels, the costumes and the setting, should be made local and contemporary.

S. Francis himself, with an imagination so vivid that it clothed the experience with reality, undertook a pilgrimage of the spirit to Bethlehem when the Christmas stars were shining on Assisi. In his vision he came to the stable where the young child lay, took the Infant in his arms and gently rocked Him. Following his example and teaching, a Franciscan nun also made the journey to the Holy Land; she saw the Mother and the Child in Bethlehem, carried the tiny Jesus in her arms when they went to Jerusalem; she shared the rigours of the flight to Egypt where she watched the Virgin sew, Joseph at his bench, and accompanied the Child when He went on errands for His mother. S. Gertrude also made the spiritual pilgrimage and felt the arms of the Baby around her neck when she lifted Him from His cradle.

So the passionate effort and the vivid imagination of fervent Christians brought the Virgin, the Child, the saints, even God Himself nearer to their own time and place until devout men and women seemed to enter into the physical possession of the invisible. But there were real dangers flowing from these practices, the dangers that inevitably accompany too great familiarity.

In the Twelfth Century the infant Jesus wears the tunic and the pallium of the philosophers, but in the Fourteenth Century He is naked to the waist and would be wholly bare if the Virgin did not throw a fold of her mantle over Him. From this time forward the Virgin, whom earlier generations had conceived as belonging to eternity, not to time, appears as the very human mother nursing the baby at her breast with all the indifference of a peasant wet-nurse. The Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries would never have conceived so earthly a mother or so humanly hungry a child; they would not have so sacrificed their timelessness to their humanity.

The same treatment was accorded to the saints. Up to the latter part of the Thirteenth Century these had been clothed in long tunics and simple draperies, as if they belonged to no time nor place but only to the ages. In the Fourteenth Century, however, it was difficult to distinguish the peasant of France from his patron, the saint from his worshipper. The holy men of ages past now wear a costume that belonged to the streets of Paris in the days of Charles VII, of Louis XI, or of Louis XII. In a Book of Hours, S. Martin of Fouquet is given the armour of a young knight who fought in the English Wars; in the glass of Conches, S. Adrian is a hero of the Italian campaigns, one who entered Milan with Charles VIII. SS. Cosmas and Damian in Anne of Brittany's Book of Hours are two young doctors of the Parisian Faculty of Medicine.

As the years passed the details and the background, the setting and the costumes, became increasingly important while the spiritual significance of the scene faded into darkness. Anachronisms flourished. S. Anne, the mother of the Virgin, must have lived in Touraine, for the artist shows the towers of Tours Cathedral in the background. The Holy Family fled not to Egypt but to France, for the artist portrays the scene in the valley of the Indre; Moses must have kept Jethro's sheep where flow the waters of the Rhône, for the Virgin and the Child appear in the glory of the Burning Bush with the cities of Beaucaire and of Tarascon in the distance. The infancy of Jesus was spent in Flanders, for le Maître de Flémalle turns the stable of Bethlehem into the interior of the home of a wealthy Flemish bourgeois citizen. In the hands of Paul Veronese, Levi the Publican, who became S. Matthew, invited Christ to a feast that was spread on the balcony of a Venetian palace, overlooking the canals, the churches, and the stately dwellings of the city.



Thus the Gospel lost its universal and timeless significance and became in turn Dutch, Flemish, German, French, or Italian, according to the nationality of the artist; and the conception of S. Francis, that Christ belonged to every age and the Gospel to every generation, led at last to the loss of the Saviour, to the enfeeblement of the spiritual or devotional values of the story, and to the glorification of those elements that should have been mere accessories, as the artists gave their care and skill to the backgrounds, the setting, the costumes and the details, finding in these, not in the story of the Christ, that which was worthy of their supreme concern.

True, many artists of the late Fifteenth Century tried to regain the universality of earlier years but, lacking the spirituality of the Middle Ages, they were more concerned with the arrangement of the parts, the handling of the light, the harmony of the colouring, the correct proportions and grouping of the characters than they were with the religious implications or lessons. Consequently the Gospel lost in their hands more than it gained.

However strongly S. Francis may have urged all Christians to share, through the exercise of a devout imagination, the experiences and emotions of those who gathered around the manger in Bethlehem on that first Christmas night, he laid much greater stress upon the Passion. He himself so spent his days and hours before the cross that the "stigmata," the marks of the five wounds, were reported to have appeared in his side, on his hands and feet.

Partly because of the peculiar temper of the age, and largely by reason of S. Francis' influence and the preaching of his disciples, the events that led to, or were enacted upon, Calvary more and more preoccupied the minds of men, and from the beginning of the Fourteenth Century onward meditations,

poems, tracts, dialogues, and sermons—rare in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries—dealing with the sufferings of Jesus appeared in steadily increasing volume.

S. Gertrude (1256-1302) believed that no spiritual discipline could be compared with that of meditation upon the cross of Christ—none other than the Saviour Himself had taught her so, for one Good Friday when she was listening, weeping, to the story of His agonies Jesus Himself appeared and received her tears in a golden cup. Suso not only meditated upon the Passion but re-enacted it—alone, at night, in the stillness of the monastery. He conceived one pillar of the cloister to be the Garden of Olives, another the Prætorium of Herod, a third the house of the High Priest. So from pillar to pillar he went, bearing on his shoulders a heavy cross, until he reached his Calvary—the crucifix in the monastery chapel. Returning to his cell, he saw the Virgin walking at his side, her dress stained red by the blood of her Son. It is probable that the Stations of the Cross originated in this midnight vigil of the monk.<sup>1</sup>

S. Brigitte (1302-1340) said that the Virgin herself had appeared to her and had described in detail the dread hours upon Calvary. When the executioners laid Jesus on the cross and began to drive the nails through his hands and feet the mists closed down upon her and she fainted away. When consciousness returned her opening eyes fell upon her Son and Saviour hanging above her head. The blood was streaming from beneath the

<sup>1</sup> In 1472 a citizen of Nuremberg made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem where he took the exact measurements of the distances between the stations on the Via Dolorosa as travelled by Christ. Unfortunately these measurements were lost soon after he left the Holy City. With a determination that would not be discouraged the Nuremberger made the journey a second time, and on his return secured the aid of a sculptor who made for him a "Way of the Cross" which began at the Prætorium of Pilate (one of the city gates) and ended within the city, at the Seventh Station where he placed a Pieta, a statue of the Virgin holding the dead body of Jesus on her knees.

thorns until His eyes, ears, face, hair, and beard were masked in red; His jaws were distended, His wide-opened mouth disclosed His bleeding tongue, bitten through in His agony; His stomach was so indrawn that it seemed to touch His spine, as if there were no entrails in His body.

From this time on the imagination runs riot in the effort to re-create and make vivid the sufferings of Jesus; at times it seems as if we were in the inner dungeons of a mediæval torture chamber, watching the torturers at their grim task. Tauler (1300-1361) dwelt so deeply on the scene that it seemed as if he were himself present. He saw the soldiers bind Jesus so tightly to the pillar, preparatory to the scourging, that the blood spurted from His finger tips. Oliver Maillert (1500) counted the strokes of the scourges and noticed that, before the 5,475th blow had been struck, the rods began to break and the knots of the lashes became imbedded in the flesh. These are some of the milder details of the horrors of the scene as the devout of the age conceived them; others are too dreadful even for review.<sup>2</sup>

From the vision of the agonies of Calvary the Century passed on to the contemplation of the five wounds. Orisons and prayers were composed in their honour, and "Brotherhoods of the Five Wounds" began to appear on both sides of the Alps. S. Brigitte was given a vision in which she saw the five wounds gleaming with a radiance like the noonday brightness of the sun, and felt them to be burned upon her heart.

This adoration is especially important because the five wounds were the sources of the blood that flowed from the side, the hands, and the feet of Jesus to form, for the late Fourteenth Century, a little stream; later that stream became a river in whose

<sup>2</sup> Émile Mâle, Vol. III, pp. 87 ff.

cleansing flood SS. Brigitte and Gertrude, with Tauler, longed to bathe.

In the Fifteenth Century a Flemish artist painted for a church of Oporto a picture of the cross rising above a huge baptismal font already half filled with blood that streamed from the wounds of Christ, with Christians kneeling around its sides in adoration.

A hymn which may go back to the Fourteenth Century urges the sinner to hasten to the "Fountain of the Saviour" and assures him that he will find in it a bath of life. This theme, "The Fountain of Life," appears in the glass of the Church of the Trinity, at Vendôme, where the four evangelists sit on the rim of the font, SS. Peter and Paul stand near by while Adam and Eve, half submerged, bathe away their sins, and ours, in the blood of the Crucified.

The museum of Lille possesses a painting made by Jean Bellegambe for the Abbey of Anchin. Here the Virtues, personified in feminine form, aid sinners to disrobe and mount the sides of the basin that they may bathe in the purifying blood of the five wounds.

The theme was inherited by Protestantism, as is evident from the lines of *Rock of Ages*:

"Naked to the fountain fly,  
Wash me, Saviour, or I die,"

and also in those of Cowper's hymn:

"There is a fountain filled with blood,  
Drawn from Emanuel's veins,  
And sinners plunged beneath that flood,  
Wash all their sins away."

It was not enough, however, that the blood should be allowed merely to flow from the five wounds; the veins of Jesus must be drained to the last drop, for that last drop would be sufficient to cover the guilt of thousands of sin-stained souls. So we come to the representations of the Mystic Press.

In the glass of the church at Conches Jesus stands erect, but the cross has become a vice whose crossbar is being forced down by the great screw on the upright to press the body of Jesus, as grapes are pressed, that His blood may fill the font from which the cross arises.

Still more remarkable is an engraving of the late Sixteenth Century. Here the patriarchs cultivate the vine, making ready for the harvest that comes only after long centuries of waiting. When the fulness of time is come the apostles gather the grapes and pour them into a great cask to be carried to the wine press, but it is Jesus who lies beneath that press, it is His blood, not the juice of the vines, that the disciples carry to the four famed Fathers of the Church, SS. Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, and Gregory the Great. These, having received the blood, funnel it into huge casks which are then taken by popes and cardinals to be lowered with stout ropes into the cellar of the Church where a king and an emperor, acting as porters, receive and roll them into storage.

Thus the artists affirmed the Real Presence in the Eucharist and gave expression to a theological dogma, declaring—as over against Luther, Calvin, and all the Protestants—that the Church is the sole custodian, the only guardian, of the saving blood of Jesus.

So the conception of S. Francis that the contemplation of the Passion should be the discipline of the individual, an act of personal devotion, led to the adoration of the five wounds; then

to a Fountain of Life wherein sinners might freely bathe; next to the Mystic Press by which the last drop of blood was drained from the Saviour's veins, and finally placed a weapon in the hands of the Church as she entered into battle with the rising forces of the Protestant Reformation.

Before we leave S. Francis it may be well to note that there was some real accord between the orthodox saint and the heretics of his day. Henry the Deacon, Peter Waldo, and all their kind were neither atheists nor agnostics. No priest stressed more eloquently than they the sinner's need of Christ. But confronted by a clergy many of whose members were corrupt, they vigorously maintained that the Christian might find and worship Christ without the interposition of the priest. Their heresies were anti-clerical and anti-sacerdotal; they denied a decadent Church but they did not deny the Christ.

Equally individual was the spiritual discipline of S. Francis; no priest kept watch with him when the stigmata were imprinted on his flesh. Neither S. Brigitte, S. Gertrude, Tauler, nor Oliver Maillert needed the help of clerics in their journeys to Bethlehem. The monk Suso had no bishop at his side when he made his lonely pilgrimage from pillar to pillar around his cloister, nor did any priest help him carry his heavy cross on that memorable night. But what was begun as a personal spiritual discipline ended at last in a theological dogma; the "Fountain of Life" wherein once sinners might freely bathe, was fenced around and led by conduits into the private reservoirs of the Church.

Nearly three hundred years after the birth of S. Francis, one year before Constantinople fell to Mohammed the Conqueror, another great monk was born at Ferrara, a man who more than any other of his day influenced his age and left his mark upon



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### THE FOUNTAIN OF LIFE: LILLE

From a triptych by Jean Bellegambe (Fifteenth Century). Interpretation of a pre-Renaissance hymn, the theme of which survives in *Rock of Ages*. The Virtues, personified in female form, aid sinners to disrobe and mount the sides of the basin that they may bathe in the purifying Blood.



*Princeton Univ. Lib'y.*

DETAIL FROM THE LAST JUDGMENT, SISTINE CHAPEL

By Michelangelo (Sixteenth Century). Again the Hellenic conception of the heroic Christ is dominant. But now, with the triumph of humanism, the Christ in glory yields to a young Jupiter of the pagans, enthroned above the clouds, hurling thunderbolts on those who have denied him.



the Church's art. Girolamo Savonarola was born in Ferrara in 1452 and died at the stake in Florence in 1498. His influence was as wide as Europe and you can still see its traces in the glass of the windows of the church at Brou, in those of S. Vincent and S. Patrice in Rouen, in that of the church at Conches, and in the drawings of the painter Titian. But to understand Savonarola and the inspirations that the painters and glaziers drew from him we must first understand his age, his background, and his purpose.

The popes had returned to Rome from Avignon with their dreams of world-wide dominion definitely lost. No pontiff would ever again be able to speak to the world as Hildebrand, Gregory IX and Innocent III had spoken. In the seventy years of the "Babylonian Captivity" the papacy had lost not only Europe but Italy as well. One by one the cities beyond the Apennines had passed from papal control into the hands of secular princes; in Rimini, Faenza, Pesaro, Urbino, with other cities, the authority of the pope was accorded no more than a formal recognition. Even in Rome itself the pontiff possessed the shadow of power not its substance. The city was nominally a republic; theoretically the citizens owed obedience to the successor of the great Innocents and Gregories, but without an army and without a fortress the pontiff could not translate that theory into fact. Again and again he and his cardinals had to flee their turbulent city and take refuge in Viterbo or in Orvieto.

The aim of the popes became, therefore, the re-establishment of their authority in their own city where the princely houses of the Colonna and the Orsini divided the Campagna and contended for the control of Rome; and then the reclamation, so far as that were possible, of the lost cities beyond the Apennines.

Under the six pontiffs who occupied the papal throne during the lifetime of Savonarola—Nicholas V, Calixtus III, Pius II, Paul II, Sixtus IV, and Alexander VI—these goals were largely attained. A passage had been made which led from the Vatican to the Tomb of Hadrian (the fortified Castle of S. Angelo), and from that safe retreat the pope could defy his enemies—who were no longer Emperors or Kings; no longer a Frederick Barbarossa, a Henry II of England, or a Philip Augustus of France—but a Roman Senator or a prince of a Roman House.

If the political horizons had thus changed, so also had the moral horizons, and the change in the minds and hearts of men in their outlook upon life was even more remarkable.

"The Middle Ages had given expression to all the humbler aspects of the soul. The saints, the Virgin, Christ Himself seemed to be of one blood with the poor people of the time, and to have no other glory than that which came from the depths of the soul itself. Art was therefore inspired with a profound humility and was one with the very essence of Christianity itself."<sup>3</sup>

The art of the Renaissance, however, was very different; it bears the Great Seal of Pride, the imprint of a generation when man aspired to be himself a god, possessing the self-sufficiency of deity. The idea of a Fall which had banished man from his high estate, a doctrine which had kept the artists of the Middle Ages from the representation of the nude, was repugnant to the Renaissance and no longer formed a barrier to an age which saw the highest expression of art in the undraped human form. To make man a hero, rising above all weakness, despising all the humbler virtues that had been so esteemed among the fathers; to clothe him with radiant force, and force alone, that was

<sup>3</sup> Émile Mâle, Vol. III, p. 481.

the goal of all Italy in the Sixteenth Century, and towards that goal the Italians of Savonarola's time had made long strides.

Almost every Roman, Florentine, or Venetian, every Italian lord or lordling, had read with zest of the triumphs and the pageants of the Emperors of Rome. Simon Vostre was responding to the popular taste when he drew the Triumph of Cæsar on the margins of his Book of Hours; Lorenzo de' Medici re-enacted a Triumph in the streets of Florence; Alphonso of Aragon had himself portrayed, over the portals of Castel Nuovo, entering the City of Naples in his triumphal car. Pope Paul II delighted all Rome with his splendid pageants, and the entire land, from coast to coast, rang with the scandalous displays of Pietro, of Riario blood, who at the age of twenty-six was made Archbishop and Cardinal of Florence. In the two short years of his riotous official life he found his income of sixty thousand golden florins too small to satisfy his thirst for entertainments where even his clowns, nymphs, and centaurs drank from golden goblets, where the meanest vessels were of silver. When he died he had spent two hundred thousand golden florins beyond his income, and left a debt of sixty thousand for his heirs to pay.

Ferrara itself, where Savonarola was born, was noted for the magnificence of its celebrations and processions, and when Roderigo Borgia—as Pope Alexander VI—rode through the streets of Rome to take up his residence in the Vatican, every balcony was decorated, gay streamers flamed across the streets, and all Rome was in festive dress as the pope, mounted on a snow-white horse royally caparisoned rode through the crowded, cheering streets.

But these triumphs were those of men, of little Cæsars, not of Christ; in such visions of earthly glory there was no place for

Bethlehem. Savonarola would not have it so; wherefore he laid before the eyes of the people, first of Florence and then of the European world, the triumph of the Christ. In his sermons he portrayed Jesus, victor over Death, riding in a triumphal chariot; before Him went the patriarchs, leaders, heroes, and prophets of the Old Testament, about Him marched the apostles, while an innumerable throng of the saints, martyrs, teachers, and preachers of the Church followed the chariot, all celebrating the victory of the triumphant Christ.

Titian took up the theme, drawing with his crayons what Savonarola preached. His chariot was drawn by the Bull, the Lion, the Eagle, and the Man, the symbols of the four evangelists; popes, cardinals, and bishops put their shoulders to the wheels; in front marched the great men of the Law and the Prophets—Moses holding on high the tables of the Law; Noah carrying the Ark; Abraham, the sword of his historic sacrifice, and Joshua wearing on his breastplate the emblem of the sun, halted by his command in its daily course. So rank after rank went those great servants of the living God who, believing though they had not seen, prepared the way for Him who should see all kingdoms placed beneath His feet.

Once born, the idea spread; painters, engravers, glaziers, and printers took up the theme, and churches in their frescoes or windows, and printers in their Books of Hours, repeated Savonarola's vision of the triumphant Christ. And not the triumph of Christ alone.

Geofroy Tory, who died ca. 1533, drew the triumph of the Virgin on the margins of his Book of Hours, and by his drawing inspired the glaziers of many churches—among them those of Conches, of S. Patrice, and S. Vincent at Rouen. The chariot



THE DANCE OF DEATH: FIFTEENTH CENTURY  
*Archives Photographique-Paris*

Fresco in the church at La Chaise Dieu. The Hundred Years' War and the Black Death have fostered this pre-occupation with mortality, of which the "Danse Macabre" is but one expression.



*Princeton Univ. Lib'y.*

# TOMB OF PHILIP THE BOLD, DIJON

By Claus Sluter (Fifteenth Century); characteristic of the sepulchral pomp of late-Gothic princes. The procession of "pleurants" around the base recalls of the Duke of Burgundy's great funeral cortège, which took six weeks to escort his body from Brussels to Dijon.

wherein the Virgin rides is drawn by unicorns—symbols of virginity; Venus and her nymphs follow the chariot in chains as the Devil, Death, Sin, and the Flesh had gone, bound, behind the chariot of Jesus in the windows of S. Patrice. Before the Virgin went the seven Virtues, the seven Liberal Arts, and the nine Muses, the whole cortège passing in review before those



#### THE TRIUMPH OF THE FAITH

Part of a Sixteenth Century window in the church at Brou, the entire composition is copied from a famous wood engraving by Titian. Only the right-hand half is shown. (From Émile Mâle, *L'Art, Religieux de la Fin du Moyen Âge*.)

kings of Judah, the ancestors of the Virgin, who watched the triumph from the portico of a palace.

Magnificent as the vision of Savonarola may have been, yet it is in sharp contrast with the Jesus of Venizy—the Christ who sits, naked and bound, on Calvary awaiting the hammer and the nails, and still further from the crucified Christ of Poitiers. But if we are now distant from the Christian thought of the Twelfth Century we are near to that of classic paganism. It is the pagan of Greece or of Rome who speaks in the Christ of the column in the church of S. Nicholas at Troyes—an athletic Christ, broad of chest and strong in limb, a hero awaiting but disdaining the violence of slaves.

It is the Hellenic conception of the hero that is reflected in Michelangelo's Christ in the Church of S. Maria Sopra Minerva—beautiful in line and limb, scorning the cross He carries, showing no trace of weariness or pain in His face. And it is not Christ but a Jupiter of the pagans, enthroned above the clouds, hurling his thunderbolts of destruction against his enemies and wreaking vengeance on those who have denied him, that Michelangelo portrayed on the wall of the Sistine Chapel.

So, little by little, the gods of the pagan world displaced the Jesus of Nazareth. Christ may have entered the chariot of Savonarola, but it was Jove who left it. He whom Michelangelo and the artists of the Renaissance present to us is often one who came to earth from the clouds of Olympus, not One who entered it from a stable in Bethlehem, or who left it from a little hill that was barely high enough to overlook the walls of Zion.

EMILE MÂLE, Vol. III, Chaps. III, IV, V, and VI; Part II, Chap. I (sections 1 and 2).



## Chapter Eighteen

### THE RETURN TO PAGANISM

IN 1792 the Revolutionary Government of Paris, needing ammunition wherewith to repulse invaders who had crossed the Rhine, ordered its agents to search the burial vaults of France for lead coffins that might be melted and moulded into bullets. Later the tomb-plates of bronze or copper wherewith the aisles of churches had been paved and all bronze statues were also seized, smelted and turned into artillery; thus the statue of Blanche of Castile, mother of Louis IX—turned into a cannon—became part of a battery as the great men and women of many generations, through their bronze images, rose from their graves to drive the enemy from the soil of France.<sup>1</sup>

The destruction of these tombs, on which the history of France had been recorded, deserves to rank with that of the famous Library of Alexandria, burned, according to long tradition, by 'Amr, lieutenant of the Caliph Omar in the Seventh Century, and with the destruction of the Mayan literature by the Spaniards in the Sixteenth.

Not without a distinct loss could the Abbey of S. Yves-de-Braisne be thus despoiled, for here lay Robert II who had fought at Bouvines under Philip Augustus; Pierre Mauclerc, who had battled valiantly at El Mansura; another Philip, Bishop of Beauvais, who, obedient to clerical custom, fought with a mace lest episcopal hands shed blood with a sword; and Jean de Roucy,

<sup>1</sup> Émile Mâle, Vol. III, p. 396.

who fell at Agincourt. Queen Blanche, in the garb of a nun, slept undisturbed for centuries at Maubuisson; so did Mahaut, Countess of Artois, patroness of artists while she lived; Catherine of Courtenay, daughter of an Emperor of Constantinople; and the mother of Charles V who was found, when her tomb was opened in 1635, seated on a throne with braids of gold woven through her hair.

Not only the history but much of the mind of the Middle Ages was written on these tombs, for what men thought of death, and much of what they thought of life, was here inscribed; wherefore we might have been able to trace, through the tombal monuments, the progress of Christian thought as it declined from the lofty faith of early Gothic years to the neo-paganism of the Sixteenth Century, had it not been for the vandals of the Revolution.

If we may still trace that progress we owe it to Roger de Gagnières, a Frenchman with a curious passion who, in the Seventeenth Century, spent most of his life travelling through France, accompanied by an artist, the two copying, describing, and sketching the tombs which the Revolutionists later destroyed.

Therefore we may still visit, for instance, Langres Cathedral and the two thousand tombs which once paved the aisles or lined the walls of the church, its cloister, chapter house, and connected buildings. Then, leaving Langres, we may pass with Roger de Gagnières from Normandy to Provence and study as we go, through the thirty volumes he left behind, the lost monuments of France.

The statues on the tombs were not, for very many years, portraits of the dead; in fact many of them were not carved until even their memory had wellnigh perished. Fredegunda, who

died in the Sixth Century, lies with Merovingian or Carolingian dead at S. Denis, but the houses founded by Merwig and by Pepin were long since gone and Capetians sat upon the throne when their images were carved and placed upon these graves. Not until the Thirteenth Century did Hugh Capet (996), Robert the Pious (1031), Henry I (1060), and Louis VI (1137) receive their tombs.

At S. Georges-Boscherville no statues lay on the tombs of Raoul Tancarville, who died in the Eleventh Century; or of William Tancarville, who died in the Twelfth—Knights of Normandy—until the monks of the Thirteenth Century, in gratitude to the founders of their abbey, placed their images upon their graves, clothing them in the armour that men wore nearly two hundred years after they were dead.

Earliest of all these tombal statues were those given to a Count of Maine in the church of Notre-Dame de la Couture in Le Mans, and to an unknown knight buried at Bonneval, which date from between 1180 and 1200. About the year 1220 the images of the dead began to appear on flat plates of bronze or copper which paved the aisles, and from this time forward images or statues flowed from the hands of the workers in metal or in stone in an increasing stream, and through such handiwork we may follow the trend of human thought as it passed from light to darkness, from faith to doubt, until it ended in the denials of a reborn paganism.

The tombs of the Twelfth and early Thirteenth Centuries speak to us, as they spoke to de Gagnières, of the resolute beliefs of men, their confidence in the reality of life and their denial of any validity to death. The men and women who lie here have thrown off both the weaknesses of infancy and the decrepitudes of age; they are all just thirty-three years old—the age at

which Christ died and therefore the perfect age for men. At Châlons death has given to a mother and her two daughters the same span of years; she is as young as they, and they are as old as she. Doubtless many of these dead bore in life scars, blemishes, disfigurements from disease, or deformities from birth or battle, but these have been expunged by God's gentle messenger of death who makes all things beautiful. So they lie here upon their tombs, transfigured, young, radiant with strength and beauty; their hands joined in prayer. The peace of God has left its seal upon their faces; their eyes are open since they now see God face to face, and walk in the glory of an eternal day. If a dragon, or some form of monster, is carved beneath their feet it is because they have become one with Him who trampled under foot the dragon and the basilisk, emblems of the evil that so easily besets us.

In all this the artist followed the thought and faith of his own time, giving expression to the belief of men who trusted deeply in the mercy of God. Certainly these dead had not been sinless but He who knoweth our frame, who called us from the dust, will have mercy even though we have leaped to evil as the sparks fly upward. According to the words of a Missal, "God is the eternal lover of souls" and there is no limit to His pity. Such was the faith of the early Gothic centuries. But the events of the Fourteenth Century had thrown that faith into an eclipse.

The horrors of the Hundred Years' War, the terrors of the Black Death, the "Babylonian Captivity," the anarchy of the Great Schism, the corruption of the Church, the immorality of priests and the worldliness of prelates had combined to rob men of an age-old place of refuge and to leave them exposed to all the storms of doubt.

The tombs tell the tale; a famous physician who died in 1393

appears, on his monument in a chapel of Laon Cathedral, as a naked cadaver, half mummy and half skeleton—a man trodden under foot by death, not raised to life by the hand of Christ.

Nearly ten years later Cardinal Legrange died at Avignon; his figure lies upon his tomb, desiccated and mummified, the ribs and bones barely covered by the yellowing skin. "What reason for pride have you?" his inscription cries to all who pass by. "You are but ashes; as I am so you shall be—a fetid cadaver, a pasture ground for worms."

Ghastly as may have been the portrayals of Laon and of Avignon there was far worse to come, but if we are to understand these tombs, with their brutal contradictions of the faith of the Twelfth Century, we must recall the tragedies from which they spring. We must remember, and in imagination see, the battles and massacres of the Hundred Years' War, the countless bodies of the slain left to rot upon the fields where the carrion crows and the grey wolves were the only burial squads of armies. We must remember the havoc of the Black Death when the living were often too few to bury the dead; when the purple-spotted corpses were cast into the rivers, to float a little while and then be tossed by eddies upon the shore where they fouled the air and offended the sight. Truly the Fourteenth Century had opportunity to know what death could do to the bodies of men, and how savagely it negated the kindly poetry of the Twelfth Century. Out of that knowledge and eclipse of faith came a series of tombal statues to mark the years from 1526 to 1557 which, gruesome as they were, may not be entirely passed over since they bear dramatic witness to the consequences of the loss of faith.

In the church of the Cordeliers at Vic-le-Comte, Jeanne de Bourbon, Countess of Auvergne, is buried. On her tomb she ap-

pears twice, once as she was in life—dressed in a rich garment heavily trimmed with ermine; her crown is upon her head and a lion rampant holds her heraldic shield. Here the Countess lies in all the pomp of rank and pride of race. But at her own feet she again appears, and now in very different guise. Instead of the fine garment and white ermine her mouldering body is covered by coarse grave clothes which are parted to show the graveyard worms crawling over the breast and creeping in and out of the cavities in her decaying flesh. Such representations, and there were many in this span of thirty years, recall the verses whereby Poe sang the *Tragedy of Man*. Angels were the spectators, men the actors, and the villain—

“A blood-red thing that writhes from out  
The scenic solitude.”

\* \* \*

“Out, out are the lights—out all  
And over each quivering form  
The curtain, a funeral pall,  
Comes down with the rush of a storm.  
And the angels, pallid and wan,  
Uprising, unveiling, affirm  
That the play is the tragedy, ‘Man,’  
And the hero the Conqueror, ‘Worm.’”

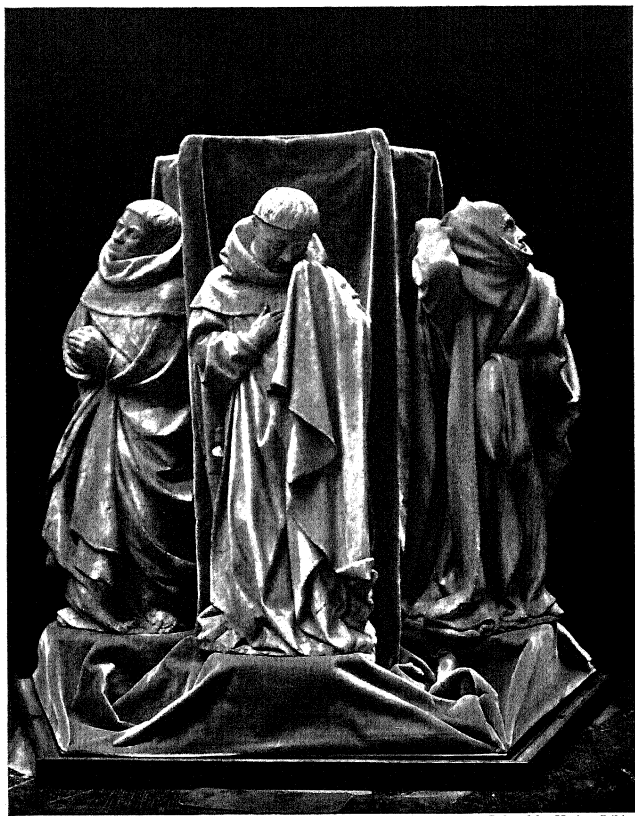
The lessons taught by these monuments are explicit:

“I am what you shall be, a little dust.”

“My body, which yesterday was beautiful, is now nothing but corruption, and you who read this shall become like me.”

“You also shall become a pasture ground for worms.”

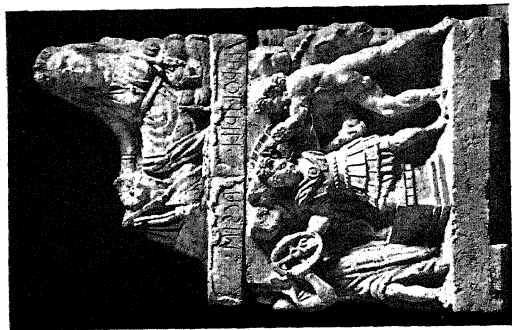
Such horrors could not long endure, since they went far beyond the reasonable limits of art and were as repulsive to the mind as they were to the eye, yet the gulf they so realistically



*Columbia Univ. Lib'y.*

#### THREE PLEURANTS BY CLAUS SLUTER

These little statuettes have survived the mutilation of Philip the Bold's monument by the men of the Revolution. In the magnificent handling of drapery and the exquisite emotionalism of face and pose, they exemplify the best in late-Gothic sculpture.



*Princeton Univ. Lib'y.*

#### PAGANISM COMES TO LIFE AGAIN

Ancient pagan sepulchral figures such as these were frequently emulated in the art of the early Renaissance. **LEFT:** Etruscan sarcophagus from the Volumni Tomb, Perugia. **RIGHT:** Roman sarcophagus in the Louvre. The break between the Twelfth and Sixteenth Centuries becomes complete when the dead, no longer recumbent or kneeling on their monuments, recline on cushions, tired spectators of past events.



revealed, which separated the mind of the Twelfth Century from that of the Sixteenth, remained unspanned. The thought and dread of death had now entered and possessed the minds of men, inscribing its warnings even on the chimney places of the homes where families gathered before leaping flames when the nights were cold. "Memento mori" speaks from a hearth in Perigeux; "Give thought to Death" on a chimney at Yvetot is made more forceful from a skull and fleshless bones. "Nascendo quotidie morimur" spoke grimly to those who gathered around the burning logs at Coulonges-les-Royaux; a motto that does not yield gracefully to translation but which gave warning that Death presides over birth; for this cause were we born and to this end came we into the world:

"Our days are like the shadows on sunny hills that lie;  
Or grasses in the meadows that blossom but to die."

At Sonnevile, where "Death must come, I await the hour" was thrown into high relief by the red flames, the master of the house, carved in stone, looked across the wide chimney to his own grinning skull. "Today to me, tomorrow to you," admonishes another fire-place.

Even at the table death was an ever present guest for the plates from which the living ate, the goblets from which they drank, bore his sign and seal. On an earthenware pitcher, made to hold either wine or cider, now in the museum of Rouen, the warning is inscribed: "Remember Death, poor foolish one."

In earlier years men could face death and cry, "I have no part in thee." Roland, dying at Roncesvalles, needed no other assurance for his passing hour than his own brief prayer—"God, I confess me guilty. I ask Thy power to cleanse me from my sins from the hour when I was born to this day, when death comes

to me." But he who died in the Fifteenth Century needed a whole book—*Ars Moriendi*—to teach him *The Art of Dying*. The joint labours of the priest and the artist could not do for him, when neo-paganism was in the air, what a very simple faith in Him whose constant message was "Believe, fear not" had done for the paladin of Charlemagne and for the Christians of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries.

The sombre note that spoke from the fire-places also echoed through the pages of literature with Baudoin de Condé's poem of *The Three Quick and the Three Dead*—a tale of three young noblemen brought suddenly face to face with three skeletons, just issued from a near-by cemetery, who gave the oft-repeated warning, "In us you see yourselves; as we are so you shall be." Life is really a "Danse Macabre," a "Dance of Death," wherein each of us, blind though we may be, is being led by skeleton hands along paths not of our choosing to the inevitable end. So the artist taught as he frescoed this "Danse Macabre" on the walls of the church at Kermaria, and on those of La Chaise Dieu (two of the few instances where the tale has survived). The same grim lesson spoke to him who passed under the arcades of the Château of Blois; it was repeated in church after church, in cemetery after cemetery, in the Books of Hours, and was enacted as a spectacle in the aisles of great cathedrals.

Doubtless life was usually less sombre than these instances would lead us to believe. Most chimney places were not haunted by grim ghosts; families, gathered around their dining tables, could drink their wine without finding death in the bottom of the cup; tombs were generally dignified and simple. Nevertheless the fact that such tombs as those of Cardinal Legrange and of Jeanne de Bourbon could be carved, that fire-places like that of Yvetot and flagons like that of Rouen could appear in

such numbers, bears witness to the loss of the power of a sane tradition. Such representations would have been impossible in the Twelfth Century when faith denied all ugliness and confidently trusted that Azrael would give beauty to all who died.



#### THE LEGEND OF THE THREE LIVING AND THE THREE DEAD

An engraving from the Book of Hours of Jean du Pré. This was a favourite subject for late Gothic and early Renaissance art. (From Émile Mâle, *L'Art Religieux de la Fin du Moyen Âge*.)

There were, however, many significant differences which distinguished the tombs of the Twelfth Century from those of the Fifteenth. In pre-Renaissance years the vanity against which the Three Dead warned the Living begins to appear as the monuments commence to boast the pride of race. Twenty-four copper statues on the tomb of Louis de Male, Count of Flanders, reminded the visitor of a great race whose dignity rivalled that of

kings. Here stood, in copper, John the Fearless, Philip the Good, Charles the Rash, the Dukes of Brabant and of Savoy, with others of their princely kin.

Earliest of all these monuments, dating from the Thirteenth Century, is that of Thibaut III, Count of Champagne, around whose tomb silver images stood to represent such royal ancestors as Louis VII, Henry I, Count of Champagne, Henri II, King of Jerusalem, Sancho the Strong, King of Navarre, and Henry II of England; such as these kept watch and ward, though generations passed, until the men of the Revolution turned their silver into coin.

Most famous of all these tombs is that of Philip the Bold, Duke of Burgundy, carved by Claus Sluter, and now in the Museum of Dijon.

When Philip died in Brussels, in 1404, two thousand ells of black cloth were purchased for the mourning costumes of those who should follow the coffin from the city where Philip died to his last resting place in Dijon. For six weeks the cortège wound its solemn way; the sons of the Duke, princes of the blood, his kin, vassals, and officials of the Court marching with the catafalque, each clad in the black robe which fell to his feet and covered the head with its Capuchin-like hood.

When Claus Sluter designed the tomb he placed these hooded figures—the “pleurants”—around the base of the monument, beneath Philip’s recumbent figure. So we may still see the procession which peasants, dead these five hundred years, forsook their work in the fields to watch as it passed along the dusty country roads; which called Burgundians from their stores, churches, market places, and dwellings as it wound slowly through the narrow streets. Here, on Philip’s tomb, still speaks the pride of race.

With equal force vanity echoes from the tomb of Louis XII, whose reliefs relate the glories of the king: the crossing of the Alps, the triumphal entry into Milan, the victory at Agnadello, and his conquests in Italy.

The tomb of Julius II in S. Peter's glorifies the militant pope as the protector of the Arts and the hero of many battles, for the little Victories that surround his tomb tread beneath their feet the provinces of Italy that the pope, who loved his armour, had regained for S. Peter's See.

No such boast of heraldry or pomp of power spoke from the tombs of the earlier Gothic years. Here may have been only a simple epitaph, an abbot's crosier or a soldier's blade. On the sepulchre of a Templar, the motto of whose Order was "Non nobis, Domine, sed nomini tuo da gloriam," there was only a name and a sword.

However, man's need of God was not forgotten, even on the tombs of the Sixteenth Century. Until the men of the Revolution mutilated the monument of Philip the Bold the procession of the "pleurants" was headed by a bishop and closed by priests and monks. These little statuettes were placed here for a serious purpose; they bespoke man's continuing faith in the potency of the Church's prayers. However corrupt Rome might have become no man doubted that, God being willing, the prayers of the priests were powerful to deliver the soul of him who had trusted in God and obeyed the Church.

The Lamb of God, carved on tombs of the Diocese of Limoges, recalls the words of the Liturgy, "O Lamb of God who takest away the sins of the world, give his soul repose." The figures of the apostles, or some incident in the life of Christ (often the raising of Lazarus), were usually carved upon the stone to affirm the faith of the dead—a faith which lent power to the prayer

of the priest, "Because he has believed in Thee, give him not over to eternal death."

Since the prayers of the priests were potent with God, chapels were endowed that Masses for the dead might perpetually be sung and the saving prayers recited; for the same reason little images of priests and monks, their prayer books open, surrounded the tomb as if ceaselessly murmuring in the ears of the dead the penitential psalms, the petitions of the liturgy, and especially the words of absolution. Yet, however devout these praying priests of stone may seem, the custom of placing their images around the tombs might, and doubtless sometimes did, degenerate into a superstition. Might not these little praying clerics defeat the claims of the devil, however just, and expunge the record of an evil life?

In the first years of the Thirteenth Century, as throughout the Twelfth, the artists represented the dead as already numbered among the Blessed; they are young, beautiful, awake and alive as God's kindly angel, Azrael, had re-created them. In the last years of the same century the sculptors became realists and, using death masks as their models, carved their images of the dead as life had left them, not as death new-fashioned them. Thereafter all the imperfections, blemishes, marks of disease, scars of battle, physical deformities, and the weight of years appeared to mar the stone faces of the dead. These peers and princes, with their coarse features, thick noses, and heavy lips, sometimes with the twisted seal of death's agony upon them, belong to the earth and only to the earth. Brute fact had supplanted faith.

Earliest of these statues is that of Isabelle of Aragon, wife of Philip III, who was killed in 1271 by a fall from her horse in Calabria, Italy, and buried in the Cathedral of Cosenza. The artist, too faithfully following her death mask, has represented

her as dead—eyes closed, the face marred by her fall, and the mouth twisted in the agony of death. First restricted to those of royal blood, when life-like images of kings were carried in the funeral procession, death masks became more common in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries and were often used for others who were of high, if not of royal, race and rank. It is, therefore, in these later centuries that the tombs more clearly reveal the drift of thought which has turned death from an angel to an enemy.

Once more: in early Gothic years a dragon, or a monster of some sort, was carved beneath the feet of the dead to testify that he who lay here had triumphed over evil and had become one with Christ, who had trampled upon the dragon and the basilisk. But the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries quite forgot the meaning of these little beasts. Now my lord lies with his favourite hound carved at his feet, and my lady with her lap-dog; two little asses kneel at the feet of Andry Lasne and his wife in a window of Vaux-de-Cernay. One lord has a bear for his stone companion, another a boar; a third has a porcupine, while two little dogs battle for a bone at the feet of an impassive fourth.

The angels no longer appear as messengers of God, sent to carry the soul to Paradise—as on the façades of S. Trophîme at Arles, at Rheims, Nîmes, and in many other churches and on many tombs. The Fifteenth Century turned the angels into young pages discharging their various duties to their lords. On the tomb of Philip the Bold they carry the heavy helmet of the Duke; here they hold a shield, there a sword, or again a casque.

Finally the break between the Twelfth and the Sixteenth Centuries becomes complete when the dead no longer lie recumbent on their monuments with their eyes open; when they no longer

kneel at the feet of Mary or at those of their patron saints, as in the Fifteenth Century. Now they recline, resting on cushions, weary of life and without the satisfactions of Paradise.

So Admiral Chabot reclines on his tomb, now in the Louvre; the Commandant's whistle wherewith he had issued orders in times of battle or of storm rests in his relaxed hand. Death has freed him from earth's round of duties but has brought no new interests. He is merely a tired spectator of events which have for him neither meaning nor importance. So also lies Valentine Balbiani whose tomb is also in the Louvre; she is represented twice, once in formal dress, leaning on her elbow and reading with a small dog lying at her feet; below she appears again, outstretched, naked and mummified. In the Cathedral of Sigüenza, in Spain, Martin Vasquez d'Arce, killed before Granada in 1486, reclines upon his tomb as if resting in his tent, the open pages of a book of romance in his hands; and in the Church of S. Pietro in Montorio, in Rome, Cardinal del Monte rests in the attitude of a Roman patrician of pagan days.

So the dead recline upon their tombs in the churches of Rome, of Florence, and of France—in all countries throughout these neo-pagan years, for this is paganism come again to life. So lay Seanti Thanunia who died in the second century before Christ; she rests on her sarcophagus, leaning her elbow on a cushion, holding a mirror in one hand and throwing back her veil with the other. This is a familiar attitude for the pagan dead and so we find them often represented on their stone sarcophagi, both Roman and Etruscan.

Thus the tombs tell the story; through them, as we pass from the Twelfth to the Sixteenth Century, we may trace the steady decline of the generations as they pass from the clear faith of the fathers to the neo-paganism of the sons.



The tale told by the dead is repeated by the living.

Near the entrance to the Stanza della Segnatura, at the Vatican, is Raphael's painting of "The Dispute over the Holy Sacrament." He has gathered on his canvas the great doctors of the Church—Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, Gregory, Thomas Aquinas, Peter Lombard and, less certainly, Duns Scotus. Here are theologians who represent the wisdom of the Church from the Third Century to the Thirteenth; from Africa perhaps to Scotland.

Across the room is Raphael's "School of Athens" wherein appear Plato, Aristotle, Archimedes, Pythagorus and many other thinkers of the ancient world. The very presence of these two paintings, where the pagan sages confront the Christian saints, affirms the belief of the age that holiness was inherent in pagan thought, that the sages were the ancestors of the saints, that the philosophy of the one was echoed in the theology of the other, and that Plato was spiritually akin to Augustine. If Columbus had discovered a new world, the Renaissance had discovered an old one, and lo! the two worlds were but one.

Intoxicated by the beauty of the ancient literature, the Humanists of the Fifteenth Century could not believe that God had revealed Himself only to the Jews. Was it possible that men, without inspiration from on high, could rise to such altitudes of thought? Had not Plato spoken of the Trinity, Aristotle of the Triune God, Cicero of the Resurrection, and Virgil of a child who should rule the ages? Had not the Sibyls foretold Christ to dwellers in Asia, Africa, and Europe?

Such beliefs were accepted eagerly, and Humanists everywhere turned from their Gospels to scan with avidity the pagan literature. The artists followed where the scholars led, but in their paintings, carvings, and glass they usually let the Sibyls repre-

sent the wisdom of the ancient world. This was the easier because the old Sibylline Oracles, originally written by Alexandrian Jews, were early rewritten by Christians and, thus edited, had been quoted by Lactantius and others in the Fourth Century. By this laying on of Christian hands the Sibyls could be made to speak clearly of the promised Christ, without the indirection of the old poets or philosophers. Thus each of the Sibyls echoed the visions of the Hebrew prophets. If the Psalmist foretold one who should trample on the lion and the dragon, the Persian Sibyl replied, "Beast, thou shalt be trampled under foot." If Isaiah promised a Saviour who should be born of a Virgin, had not the Sibyl of Lybia foretold a "Virgin, mistress of nations, who should hold the king of the living in her arms"? If the same prophet spoke of a Redeemer who should be rejected of men, the Sibyl of Erythræa had prophesied that "the Lord shall be humbled and His divine offspring shall be one with all humanity." So the artists placed the twelve Sibyls with the twelve prophets and the twelve apostles in the glass of their windows, among the carvings of the choir stalls, and in the bas-reliefs of their porches and portals. The Sibyls appear on the Butter Tower and in the choir stalls of Rouen, in the glass of Auch, on the portals of Aix and of Beauvais, at Autun, S. Ouen in Rouen, and in many churches from England to Italy, often associated with the prophets of the Old Testament and the apostles of the New—as at Auch.

Old superstitions as well as old philosophies came from the past with the drift towards paganism. Although Columbus had discovered a new world in 1492 and Magellan had circumnavigated the globe in 1519-22, yet deep into the Sixteenth Century the artists continued to conceive the world as composed of just

three parts—Europe, Asia, and Africa. Indeed, despite the voyages of Portuguese and Italian navigators, there could be no more since Balthazar, Caspar, and Melchior had been able to bring the homage of the entire Gentile world to Bethlehem. Although Copernicus had shown, in 1507, that the earth was not the centre around which all heavenly bodies revolved, that it was no more than a humble satellite of the sun, yet in 1560 the Calendar of the Shepherds was reissued without change, and men were again taught that their earth was God's ordained centre of the universe. But they were taught much more than that. They were taught that the stars determined the destinies of men; the imprint of the ascendent planets upon the new-born child was permanent and indelible; all the events of his life were predetermined by the heavens, and their sentence could never be altered or annulled. Men's epitaphs were written in their horoscopes. Even Calvin never declared a more absolute doctrine of predestination than did the astrologers, who plotted for each man a pathway from the cradle to the grave which had been determined for him, not by the kindly providence of the Christian's God, but by the cold, indifferent, and distant stars.

This faith in astrology appears in the frescoes of the Borgian apartments of the Vatican, in the choir stalls of Gallon, now at S. Denis, on the ceiling of the Cambio, at Perugia, in the church at Ferté-Bernard and in many other places as well as in the literature of the age. Joshua might command the sun to stand still in the Twelfth Century before Christ, but in the Fifteenth Century after Christ it was the sun who commanded and Joshua who obeyed!

As in the days of Isaiah when the people turned from their priests to their wizards, to necromancers, and to "those who peep

and mutter," so now the neo-pagans of the Fifteenth Century turned to the astrologers and sought counsel from the stars.

Finally, the pagan reappears in the glimpses of Hades as these are shown in the Fifteenth Century frescoes of the Cathedral of Albi. Intimate visions of Hell were not infrequent in the early Byzantine East, but they had found little favour in the West. In the Orient, however, where the influence of monasticism was manifest at an early date, Hell was dramatically conceived.

An Eastern poet of the Third Century, evidently borrowing from an earlier manuscript of the Second (a copy of which has recently been found in Egypt), described the river of fire that consumed the guilty but spared the innocent; and that flaming flood appears in Twelfth Century frescoes, of Byzantine inspiration, at Torcello.

Although these poets of the Second and Third Centuries were converts to Christianity yet they had not forgotten the beliefs in which they had been born, or the faiths of their unconverted fathers. In their portrayals of Hell they reproduce the Hades of the Greeks—they bind the sinner to Ixion's wheel; they inflict upon him the torments of Tantalus—waters that flee from his thirsty lips, ripe fruits that spring away from his famished hands. From Persia they borrowed the narrow bridge over which the Just, sustained by angels, pass safely, but from which sinners slip into the abyss. The artist of Albi evidently had before his eyes a reproduction of this Third Century Eastern manuscript for his brush betrays his debt. Many of these portrayals of Hell have vanished but at S. Maclou, in Rouen, some details remain, including Ixion's wheel. In the vaulting of the porch of Nantes Cathedral not only does the Wheel appear, but in other ways Hell is hideously conceived. At S. Dezert in Châlons-sur-Marne, at Benนอนville near Caen, at Chamniers near Civay, and in

Poitiers other fragments remind us of the gifts brought by the pagans of Greek or Roman days to the neo-pagans of the Fifteenth Century.

The monstrous Satan in the "Très Riches Heures" of the Duc de Berry, who swallows souls only to disgorge them and devour them again, recalls the bitter scorn of Seneca against gourmands of his time who "vomunt ut edant; edunt ut vomant" at their banquets.

Such scenes would have been impossible on Western churches when Gothic art was in its prime. The artist of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries, like Enkidu who refused to "open the earth" for Gilgamesh "lest terror and weeping overcome thee," will not permit us to peer behind the gates of Hell. From Beau-lieu and Conques to Bourges and Rheims he shows us the lost, led in chains to the jaws of Leviathan, but there the curtain falls. So far we go, but no further.

What the artists tell us in stone, in glass, or in frescoes is repeatedly illustrated by the chroniclers who record for us a life lived under the neo-paganism of Renaissance years which often parallels curiously that lived by men in pre-Christian centuries. In Imperial Rome, especially under such emperors as Nero and Caligula, blackmailers and informers flourished. Any Roman might be brought into court on a charge of intended, not of attempted, treason and if held guilty a fourth of the estate of the condemned might be awarded to the delator who brought the charge. In 24 A.D. Vibius Seranus, impatient for his inheritance, denounced his father and succeeded to his wealth. In 43 B.C. Thoranus, an ex-prætor, was accused of treason. When he pleaded for delay that his son, a favourite with the emperor, might intercede for him the centurion sent to lead him to execution laughed, for the son had already spoken, but on the other side;

he, too, was eager to inherit.<sup>2</sup> The lessons taught by the pagan past seem to have been well scanned by Pope Alexander VI in the Fifteenth Century:

“Having sold the scarlet to the highest bidder he used to feed his prelate with rich benefices. When he had fattened him sufficiently he poisoned him, laid hands upon his hoards and recommenced the game. Paolo Capello, the Venetian ambassador, wrote in the year 1500: ‘Every night they find in Rome the bodies of four or five murdered men, bishops, prelates and so forth.’ To be a prince of the Church in those days was dangerous.”<sup>3</sup>

Cardinals were hardly more secure than bishops, for Panvinius reports the deaths of three poisoned cardinals, and to his list those of Capua and of Verona might be added. When Cesare’s hired assassins threw the body of the Duke of Gandia into the Tiber a boatman, who saw the act, did not think it worth while to report it, for he had seen “a hundred bodies thrown into the river at the same spot and no questions had been asked about them afterwards.”<sup>4</sup>

The splendid and costly feasts of Lucius Verres or of Marcus Gabius Apicius were paralleled by those of Pietro Riario, Cardinal of Florence and Patriarch of Constantinople at the age of twenty-six. In his palace the vilest vessels were of silver, and at his banquets jesters and buffoons drank from golden cups. At Agostino Chigi’s feasts the golden plates, on which fish from Byzantium and ragouts of parrots’ tongues had been served, were tossed out of the windows into the Tiber by the well-wined guests. Julius Cæsar was no more open in his purchase of the votes of a venal Senate than was Roderigo Borgia when, by the

<sup>2</sup> William S. Davis, *Influence of Wealth in Imperial Rome*, pp. 7 and 187 ff.

<sup>3</sup> J. A. Symonds, *Age of the Despots*, p. 414.

<sup>4</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 425.

paid-for votes of the College of Cardinals, he became Alexander VI.<sup>5</sup>

We are nearing the end of the road. We have seen Christian art arise, where its architecture arose, in the depths of the ancient paganism. We have followed it along the same path that the architecture followed until it reached its apogee in the early Gothic period; then we have watched its slow decline until it vanished in the shadows of a new paganism that was born of the old. The effective unity which once gave to Christian art the power of an organized sentiment, the effectiveness of a universal tradition, has been destroyed. The symbolism which men of old had been taught from childhood to understand, which enabled the artists to teach successive generations the great messages of the gospels and the historic doctrines of the Church, is now silenced and forgotten. The individualism of the Renaissance, which made each artist a law unto himself, which overthrew the disciplined regimentation of earlier years when the function of art was to instruct the mind, to uplift the soul, and not to please the eye, is everywhere triumphant.

Abandoned by its master whom it had so long and so well served, mortally wounded in the house of its friends, the old art awaits only the coup de grâce from the keen irony and bitter satire of Calvin and his kind.

"An old and faithful servant, forsaken by the Church, killed by the Renaissance, and buried by the Reformation"—let this be its epitaph.

<sup>5</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 391 and 406.





## L'Envoi

JOHN, translated from his exile on Patmos to the heights of heaven where the wide circuit of the globe lay beneath his feet, saw the earth and the sea give up their dead and a "great multitude whom no man could number" coming from the North and the South, from the East and the West, to gather before a throne whereon One sat whose eyes were as a flame of fire, whose voice was as the sound of many waters, but who was scarred in His hands and feet.

The Cathedral also sees the marching ranks of that great multitude, not pouring through the gates of Heaven but leaving the last portals of this earth and before we leave her aisles—for the night is falling and the evening calls us home—she would show that vision unto us.

Stand aside now and look. The Western doors are lifting up their heads and through the Cathedral's portals, swinging wide, they come—rank behind rank—who wrote their memorials on her walls, in her art or in her architecture, for us to read. Men of Paleolithic, Mesolithic, or Neolithic days lead the way; Magdalenians and Azelians are followed by those of Sumer or of Accad; by Babylonians and Assyrians; by Achæmenians and Sassanids of Persia; by "Parthians, Medes, and Elamites; by dwellers in Mesopotamia, Cappadocia, Pontus, and Asia; in Phrygia and Pamphylia; in Egypt, Lybia, Rome, Crete, and in Arabia." Here are Goths, Visigoths, Celts, and Teutons; Scythians and Sarmatians; women of the nomadic tribes of Altai-Iran;

Aryans and Semites—they may neither be numbered nor named.

At last the vision fades; the church grows still and the aisles seem empty. But the Cathedral has spoken; she who has seen the whole of man's history unroll has unveiled for us our past. She has brought our fathers of twenty millennia and of five hundred generations from the dust. She has touched our eyes and enabled us to see what no man could ever see had not the power and the vision come from her.

We shall not forget. Throughout all our years hereafter there shall come moments when the busy street shall suddenly be stilled; when, amidst hurrying crowds, we shall find ourselves alone, and the vision shall return. Again we shall see the long aisles, the soaring columns, the kindly saints in the splendour of jewelled windows, the great vault looming out of darkness overhead, and the endless procession of "the called of God."

And when for us the final twilight falls, when the last slow hour of that night is sped, and when, in early dawn,

“. . . to dying eyes

The casement slowly grows a glimmering square"

something deep within us shall arise and, leaving all else behind, go forth to seek its place in the ranks of that innumerable multitude. Then, following where our fathers trod, we shall cross the porch and enter the portals of the Cathedral, descend her nave, cross her transepts, pass through her choir, up the chancel steps, beyond the Bishop's Throne and the High Altar until with the Church's final benediction, "Ite in pace," to speed us on our way, and her bells pealing to guard us as we go, we shall wing our flight "upward where the stars are burning" to the White Throne whereon He sits who knew us and called us all by name, long before men placed those marks on His hands and feet.





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